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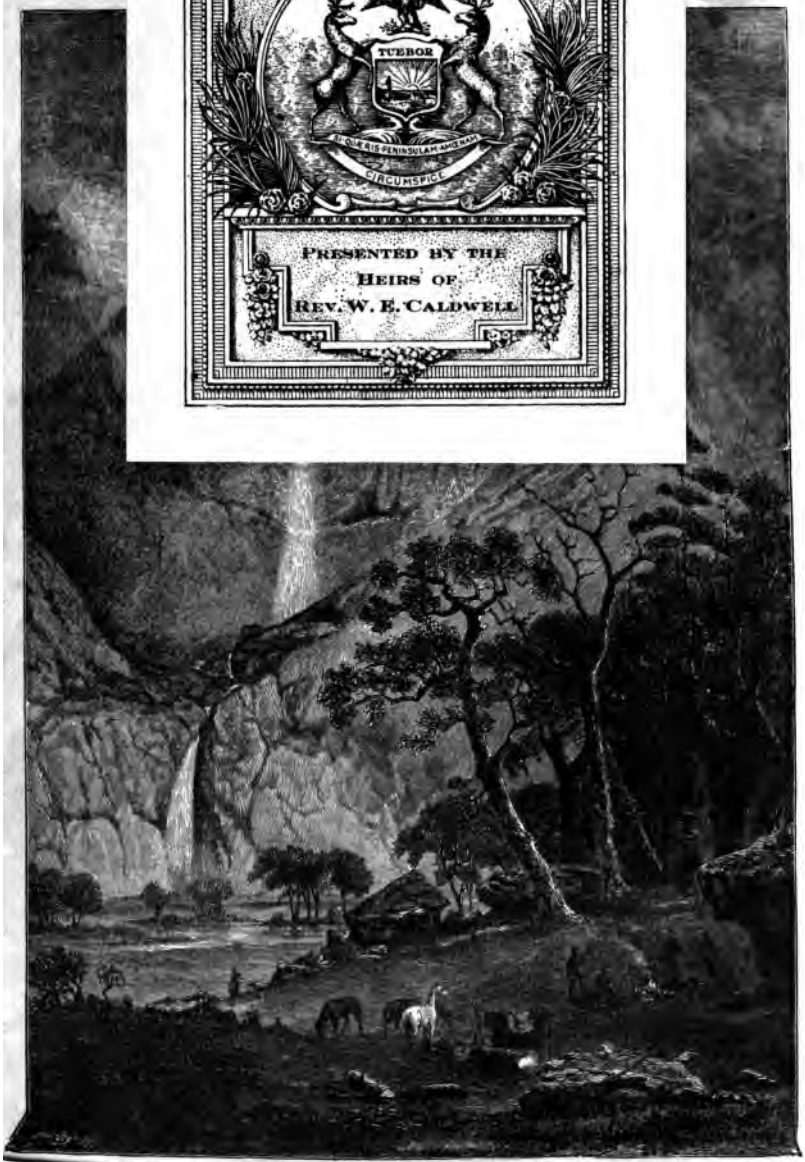

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WINDINGS

OF THE

RIVER OF THE WATER OF LIFE.

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1849, by

GEORGE B. CHEEVER, D.D.,

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PREFACE.

In this humble attempt to unite the speculative and the practical on the subject of Faith, I have followed no theory, but have endeavored to trace the stream of Christian experience, as it is recorded in the Word of God, and makes its appearance in the hearts of God's people. But we begin the stream back of its appearance as a River of Life, even there, where belief exists, as a constitutional element of our being, though not as faith in God manifest in the flesh. Men cannot live even in and for the body only, without a belief in something above the body, and out of it. We take away the very ground under the feet of infidelity, by showing that the unbeliever, even in *not* believing, has to throw himself upon belief, and has to be a more credulous soul by far, than the man of spiritual Faith. But as Thomas Carlyle somewhere excellently says (or something very like it), the credulity of unbelief is a faith in mere inert dead masses, with a blank denial or blind ignorance of that spiritual lightning, which alone can set things on fire. And a woful, dead, hopeless age it is, when the belief in spiritual lightning has gone, and there is nothing deemed real but the five senses.

The union of Grace and Truth is only in Jesus Christ; and Faith is the manifestation, not of human power, but of Christ himself in the mind, Christ in the heart, Christ in the life, and Christ in the soul, the hope of glory. Faith is a life, not a speculation; it is a life, and not a mere emotion in regard to the Author of life. I have endeavored to trace its workings, its forms, its results, its various developments, for the ministry of the life of a practical piety, in Christians who, like Paul, count not themselves to have attained, but would be pressing forward. May the Divine blessing accompany the effort!

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DEVELOPMENT, DISCIPLINE,

AND

FRUITS OF FAITH.

PART FIRST.

GRACE AND TRUTH.

CHRIST IN THE MIND.

WINDINGS OF THE RIVER

OF THE

WATER OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

Beginnings of the River.—Poverty of truth without life.—Grace and truth combined only in Christ.—Mistakes of mere head-work without heart-work.

Does the River of the Water of Life go into the mind first, and into the heart through the mind, or into the mind through the heart? Grecian, Jewish, and Saxon philosophers, so called, might laugh at this question, as if it were very easily answered; for they think that truth alone constitutes life, truth according to their seeing; and that all truth is addressed only to the understanding. But truth alone, truth left to itself, is *not* the River of the Water of Life to sinful beings; but if *they* be left to *themselves*, and the truth left to *itself* and to their reception of it, it is a river of death. The Law of God is truth without mixture; but to sinful beings it is not a river of life; without grace it worketh death. The Law was given by Moses, but *Grace* and Truth came by Jesus Christ. Grace and Truth together, and that only, is the River of the Water of Life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. Grace *and* Truth, from the throne of God *and* of the Lamb.

All truth *is* addressed to the understanding; but if men "walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their hearts," then the process of enlightenment, the process of cure, must begin with the *heart.* In this sense the River of the Water of Life runs into the heart first, from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and then into the mind; and the mind is enlightened only in proportion as the heart is cleansed. Hence the prayer of the Psalmist, Create in me a clean heart, O God! and the prayer of the Apostle, "That the God our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; *the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.*" The eyes of the understanding, in spiritual things, are right affections and a believing heart. This is that *single* eye, with which the whole body shall be full of light. Full of light, because there is *life-light* in the heart. It is not simple intention merely, but a heart purified by faith. A single eye, in the ordinary sense, is no great wonder. A man may have a single eye, it is well said, by putting one eye out, or keeping one eye shut; and in this way men full of prejudice and blindness often think they have a single eye. In this way even an Atheist may have a single eye, putting one eye out entirely, and looking with the other straight forward into darkness. But the true single eye is where both eyes look out from a single heart, purified by faith; looking together, and looking to God, and looking in God's light.

And so again the Apostle prays to be "strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, *being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend.*" So it is plain that *love* is the source and ground of comprehending—of understanding. Right affections are the opening of the eyes of the understanding, the removal of the blindness of the heart, and then and thus light pours into the mind. "The

entrance of thy words giveth light; it *giveth understanding* to the simple."

In HIM was Life, and the *Life* was the light of men. The *Life* was the light, not the *light* was the life. The law given by Moses was light, but it was not life. In Him, in Christ was the *life*, and the *life* was the light. Truth discloses sin, but cannot cure it. God's law shines upon it, but only to forbid and condemn it. The light alone cannot remove the deformed objects it shines upon, but there must be another hand, another power, another influence. There must be a *life* at work *within*, as well as a *light* shining *upon*.

For this reason it is that that remarkable expression is used to signify regenerated persons, *Children of Light.* Children; it is a filial, affectionate, obedient relationship to the light as life, a confiding, childlike life in it. *Children* of light, not mere *servants* or slaves. The servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the Son abideth ever. The mind without the heart may be a *slave* of light, but the heart only can be a *child* of light. The mind filled with light may be a convict, condemned to work at the galleys; but the regenerated *heart* filled with light is a free, gentle, loving child. And so, for all gracious truth, all true liberty, all true life, the mind must come, just like a little child, to Christ. For truth, the mind may go to a great many sources, and may gather many kinds of truth; but for grace *and* truth it can go only to Jesus Christ; it can find that combination nowhere else.

Let men therefore beware of thinking to work out their own salvation by the truth only, or the head only, or by speculative knowledge, or by the prayer-book only, or by external rites. The salvation of the soul will not come, revivals of religion will not come, except by grace and truth, and *they* come only by Jesus Christ. And whoever undertakes to produce them in any other way than by going to him, will be found very much in the predicament of those seven sons of one Sceva a Jew and Chief Priest, who took upon themselves to call over those who had evil

spirits, the *name* of the Lord Jesus; the name only, but neither grace nor truth; and the man in whom the evil spirit dwelt leaped upon them and beat them, so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded. Such, sooner or later, must be the result of all efforts, either upon ourselves or others, made by mere names and ceremonies, without a heart acquaintance with Christ, and a humble, contrite application to him for grace and truth.

Truth, alone, is mere head-work, grace is heart-work. Truth in the head alone, turns into error; it becomes vermiculate, as Lord Bacon once said of the wit of man exercised upon mere speculation; it breeds worms, and men spin it into brain-cobwebs of their own fancies. Men by the head, take truth which was meant for the heart, and which must be baptized into the heart, along with grace, and the heart into it, before it would be salvation, and absolutely pervert it into falsehood by using it apart from its meaning and intent. They take the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, for example, which is really heart-truth, and heart-affecting truth, and was meant eminently for the heart's good, and which, as a rite, is the heart's language of loving remembrance towards the Blessed Saviour, and the Saviour's assurance of never-ceasing love to his disciples, and they work at it and by it with the head only; they assert and reason themselves into regeneration by it; they eat it, and say they are saved by the ordinance; and a man who believes himself saved by an external ordinance, or is persuaded that he receives the Spirit of God by an external ordinance, without the heart, is not likely to take much other trouble to gain the Spirit of God; is not likely, either, to inquire very particularly into the *need* of the Spirit of God in the *heart*, or to make regeneration a heart-work in any way. So this truth is made a lie, by working at it with the head only, without the heart. We might show, indeed, how multitudes of monstrous, misshapen errors have come about in the same way.

We say of a ship, ill-constructed, that she is too much by the head; she ploughs *into* the waves, instead of flying over them, and making them the means of her progress: so men who carry truth by the head knock their heads against it, instead of using it for heart-life, and for onward progress. Such men put forms for realities, and change realities into mere forms. They take, for example, the truth of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, which was meant for the heart, and is nothing without the heart, and put it into the form of baptism, and go at it by the head, saying, that men are regenerated by baptism, and that baptism is regeneration. They take the truth of baptism, also, which is nothing without the heart, and was meant for the heart to be put into, and which is like an outward case to be put round a picture that God himself is painting, and by head-work only they put baptism itself in the place of that which it merely signifies, in the place and stead of regeneration in the heart. So men come to man to do that for them which God only can do. Suppose that men should be so utterly deluded as to resort to a man professing the ability to produce perfect miniatures, but giving instead thereof merely the outside morocco cases; and suppose they should accept the empty cases and carry them home on the faith of the man's assurance (inasmuch as he received his commission for painting in a direct line from Titian), that when they get home they shall find the pictures inside; we should look upon that as a very strange delusion. Yet in spiritual things, many take the cases, and comfort themselves with the assurance that they have the pictures; and they lay them away carefully, but never look inside to see whether they are not disappointed. Poor Ignorance fumbled for his roll of assurance at the Gate of the Celestial City, but found it not!

Thus more head-*work* makes absolute error out of heart-*truth*. It is so in innumerable cases. Prayer itself may be turned from truth into error, and always is, when it is resorted to and relied upon by the ***head*** without the ***heart***.

It is truth resorted to without grace. A man must bring his heart to Christ, for truth and grace to be put into it, and not stand tinkering upon it himself by truth only, or by Moses instead of Christ. Moses and morality are good, if they lead to Christ. Moses *commanding* morality is good, as the Schoolmaster, to teach a man his own sinfulness, his utter destitution of all that can make any *pretence* to morality, and his need of Christ; but that is all Moses can do. And if, instead of learning of Moses their need of grace and truth, and coming to Christ for it, men work with Moses and truth only, it is just using truth with the head merely, and not the heart, and so it proves error, or at the best, mere condemnation. Such will the truth always be to sinful men, separated from grace and without it.

There are fabrics of our food, which have to pass through certain processes to become wholesome, and taken without those processes, may be absolute poisons. There are fabrics in the arts for our clothing, which have to pass through certain mediums or processes before they are fit for use, and which, if men take them without those processes, are slazy and worthless. So it is with forms of truth belonging to the heart, and of heart-manufacture by grace, when men attempt empirically to lay hold upon them, and pronounce names over them, and use them in the *raw*, without those heart processes. They may be *deemed* valuable, but they are worthless. They may be relied upon for salvation, but dead or perverted truth is no better for salvation than positive unmingled error. It is just as if a man going to sea, should provide his ship with a quantity of unspun hemp instead of cables, and having pronounced the word *cables* over it, should confidently set sail, insisting that the heap of raw hemp was cable enough, and would hold the ship, if kept beneath the hatches: so miserably mad and deluded are men who rely upon forms, without God's grace in the heart, in the affections. There are those who, in times of spiritual

danger, run to forms instead of Christ, as if a return to form, or a clinging to form, would save them. A delusion not unlike that of those who, in a case of fire, will throw a looking-glass out of the window, and carry an andiron carefully down stairs.

Even where external forms seem not to be trusted in, nor mere external morality, there may be a formalism of the heart, and a trusting to Moses *there* without grace, or to truth there without Christ. And truth without Christ is as poor as forms without truth. We may sometimes see serious-minded men pounding upon their own hearts with prayer and with the truth, away from Christ, and wondering that still nothing is returned but the ring of empty metal. They do not pound very earnestly, for if they did, like Luther, for example, in *his* time of delusions, they would soon find the vanity of such mere *pronunciamentos* away from Christ. But they work just enough to half satisfy conscience, and keep themselves from that self-despair which might lead to Christ. It may, perhaps, be asked, What *can* a man do, otherwise than go to the Word of God and prayer? He can go to Christ. That is what he can do, and must do, and that is his whole duty. But is not my Word (does not God say?) like the fire and hammer, to break the rock in pieces? Indeed it is, in the hands of the Spirit of God, in the hands of Christ; but if you stay away from Christ, and think to do the work yourself before coming to him, you may stay pounding till you die, and no good will come of it. Take the hammer and the fire, and your heart also, and carry them to Christ.

CHAPTER II.

Coloring of Truth through the prism of individual experience.—Grace a winding River, and a free, original, unconstrained life.—Danger of making press-gangs out of human theories and hypotheses.—The law *within* and the law *without*.—Light within and light without.—Heart-light and intellectual light, and God's prerogative in regard to them.

THE stream of truth, running into the heart and mind, or through the heart into the mind, will also be colored, more or less, by the individual's own experience; a thing in regard to which each for himself, and all for each, must be upon their guard. If not, how can any one know that his peculiar views, which he may have regarded as the result of great knowledge or originality, are not owing merely to a defective experience? It is very certain that the purer, the truer, and deeper a soul's religious experience becomes, and the more a man distrusts and abases self, and clings solely to God and his Word, exalting *them*, the more sure and trustworthy and full of truth will be that soul's views of religious doctrine. He who exalts the Word, the Word will exalt him; but he who neglects or disesteems the Word, will himself go down in proportion. It is surprising what an invigorating and expanding power a great faith in God's Word exerts upon the mind; and on the other hand, a weak faith in God's Word leads to weakness, in doubt, self-confidence, and dependence upon men.

Hence, among the questions to be asked concerning a propounder of new things are these: Has he a deep

experience of the Divine Life? Is he known as maintaining a close walk with God? Is he a soul of much prayer, much communion with Christ, living, by faith, upon God's Word, received as God's, not man's? It is certain that none but such souls are qualified to be guides in untried paths. Hence the writing of the books of inspiration was committed only to those, whom God had trained to great heights of attainment in holiness. If it had not been so, where would have been, or *what* would have been, our volume of inspiration? If only an ordinary Christian had had the writing of the Epistles, what a poor and low exhibition of Christian experience would we have had, instead of the glowing and lofty experience of Paul, Peter, and John; what a defective or excrescential or one-sided exhibition, in personal hobbies of doctrine ridden upon out of vanity, like the shows of horsemanship in a circus, instead of simple gospel truth, displayed for God's glory.

This River of grace in the heart of man runs not in an artificial channel, but is a winding stream, going hither and thither at God's will, not man's. Men may attempt to dyke it in, and keep it strait and elaborate, according to their own mathematical surveying of the ground, but it follows no human arrangement or analysis, but takes its own way. And a much sweeter, lovelier way it is, than men's metaphysics would often appoint for it, or than any human heart-geographer ever traces for it in his map, when, wishing to have all things very accurate, and according to some pretended invariable model or rule, he draws his line and says, this course the river of grace always pursues. Doubtless, there has been too much pursuing of this river by maps, after certain old surveys by others, taken for complete and accurate, instead of going anew to the fountain head in God's word, and thence following the stream through valley and meadow, woodland and green pastures.

The law of the *Spirit* of life in Christ Jesus works various forms of fruit and beauty in the *character* of life, almost infinitely various, yet all the work of the self-same

Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. The work of faith, the life of faith, the law of faith, is not a work, or life, or law, of human metaphysics or monotony; but of infinite grace, wisdom, and variety. It is a mistake indeed, to take one character, and analyse the law and proceedings of faith from that, and make a rule out of it, and carpenter-like proceed to regulate every other character accordingly. The work of grace is a free, original life, after an inward law.

An external law indeed it is, as God's law; but that law, from being merely external, becomes an inward law of life, an in-working law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. While God's law is merely *without* a man, *outside* of him, he is outside of *it*, and it acts no otherwise upon him, if it acts at all, than as a man acts upon a clock who stands outside of it and turns the hands according to the town-time, its own mainspring being broken. But when the maker of the clock comes and puts it inwardly to rights, he puts, as it were, the principle and law of the external time within the heart of it, and then it goes freely of itself, and keeps time without any need of a man standing beside it, with a law of the town-clock by the sun, to turn its hands. Hence God says that when the time of the free dispensation of his spirit comes, he will write his law in men's hearts, and hence David says, "Thy law have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee;" and he prays the same thing in various forms. He did not think it enough to study God's law with his *eyes*, but he must hide it within his *heart*, to work, *as* a law, there; and so, by governing his affections and thoughts, or rather inspiring them, or as a fountain bubbling up with them from the bottom, it would govern his life, running with the winding stream of his thoughts and affections everywhere.

The Trees of Righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified, are of an endless attractiveness and beauty in their variety. But you are not to compel them all into one form or manner of verdure and foliage,

any more than you are to order all the trees of the world into the shape of oaks or elms. Men are sometimes, in their workings upon the plants of divine grace, like Chinese farmers, or like the caterers to royal tastes in Versailles gardens; they will cut the foliage of nature into squares, pyramids, and triangles, or will let nothing grow that is not planted in straight lines. There has been much tendency to such kind of surveying and regulation. Man shows his original self-will even in his application of God's word, which he has an inveterate, unconquerable disposition to order exactly after his own theory and experience. If he has a striking original experience in himself, he will take that; or if a remarkable original experience in another shall powerfully arrest his admiration and square with his own metaphysics, he will take that. Whatever is adopted and made the child of self-love, is petted and spoiled by over-indulgence. In this way very good things may become injurious; very healthful developments may be cankered into excrescences; very harmless single instances or exceptions may be exalted into dangerous precedents and rules. In order to make a *paté de foie de Strasburg* for spiritual epicures, many will take a favorite theory and sow up its eyes, and stuff it, and will do this with every truth they can lay hold of. The truths both of nature and of God's word too often fare with theorizers, as poor unprotected laborers, when they meet with press-gangs for a man-of-war; a poor peasant with his spade finds himself suddenly and violently transmuted into a sailor.

But the wind bloweth where it listeth, and always will; and the river runneth and windeth where it listeth, and always will; and the Trees of Life will always bear at least twelve manner of fruits for the healing of the nations. There always will be more things than are dreamed of in our philosophy. As we are fearfully and wonderfully made in mind and body, so that no man can fathom God's wisdom, either in the one or the other, nor can possibly tell how they are linked together, so are we fearfully and

wonderfully made in the new creation by the Spirit. Thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all. "*Marvellous* are thy works," says David, and *that* my soul knoweth right well; but very little else beside that *do* I know right well, at all. Curiously wrought are we, and precious are God's thoughts unto us, and so great is the sum of them, that if we should count them, they are more in number than the sand. Let a man stand upon the sea shore and begin the work of counting; let him try that first, before he puts the line of his arithmetic down into the deeps of God's thoughts, with the vanity of making a rule for others.

Then, too, as we have seen, the River of the Water of Life runs through the *heart*, not the mind merely; and, little as a man knows of a man's mind, yet he can fathom *that* much more easily than he can a man's heart. "Who *can* know it? I the Lord." Yea, and it is the Lord only that knoweth how to gather up into his own bosom all the reins of our affections. As a charioteer, he bindeth them about his arm, and guideth us at pleasure. We have heard of a man preaching upon the text, "Marvel not," &c., and proving from it, or rather forcing upon it, the lie, that there was nothing very marvellous in the work of regeneration! A man who could *see* the wind might, perhaps, see such a conclusion, and come honestly by it. Men who pride themselves much upon their knowledge of the human heart are very apt to have confounded a little knowledge of the workings of the mind with heart knowledge, and conclude themselves masters of human nature. 'Tis as easy as lying! Perhaps next to the mystery of God in Christ is the mystery of God shining in the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Man shines as far as the intellect; God shines into the heart. There is vastly more light in this world upon the intellect than there is in the heart. Intellectual light men are very proud of, and it *makes* them proud; heart-light

they care little about, for it makes them humble, and like little children. And yet it is so strange and so beautiful a thing, that, wherever it appears, men cannot help admiring it. Heart-light in books they recognise and acknowledge as one of the highest proofs of genius. Heart-light is life-light, warm, fervent, kindling others. Mere intellectual light is cold, pale, unattractive. There is all the difference that there is between painted light or reflected light upon a portrait or statue, and the light of life, the light of the warm coloring of flesh and blood, transmitting even the light of the affections to the beholder. Man's light falls upon the intellect, God's light goes into the heart. It *must* enter there, it must work there, it must live there, as the light of life, or all is darkness and death. Hence our blessed Lord says, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. This is a light that must enter into the heart, the affections, just as the light of the sun enters into the composition of plants, and they grow in it, and it works and grows in them. If it merely fell *upon* them, there would be no life; without this inward quickening process, all would be winter, like as in a glorious glittering day in February, though our northern world is flooded with light, clearer than that of the tropics, yet the time of germinating, quickening life in nature not having come, the light does not enter into the composition and growth of vegetation, and only serves to show cold forms and bare leafless outlines. But when the spring time and summer come, God shoots the light into the heart of all nature, and it becomes the light of life. Just so God must shoot it into the heart of man, and this is a work that man alone cannot do. Neither can man alone make man believe; that also is God's prerogative, and for this very reason, because man gets no further than the intellect with his light, while God pierces through the intellect into the heart, and then shines through the heart into the intellect.

CHAPTER III.

Faith here, a discipline preparatory to knowledge and faith hereafter.—Passage of faith into knowledge and life.—Faith in the testimony of God becoming experience.—The life of heaven a life of faith.—The extreme credulity of unbelief.—Necessity of faith in evil as well as good.—Impossibility of escaping from the evil, except by believing God's testimony in regard to it.

FAITH is to be regarded as a discipline. It is a discipline of character in this life, preparatory for the life of heaven. The life of heaven will be a life of faith to a far greater extent than even the life of this world. This may seem paradoxical, especially to a mind dwelling on the common expression that in heaven faith is swallowed up in sight. But that is an expression nowhere to be found in the Scriptures. We read that death shall be swallowed up in victory, but never that faith shall be swallowed up in sight. So far is this from being the case, that in reality the sight which the soul shall enjoy in heaven will only prepare it for the exercise of still greater faith, and faith must continue to be the life of the soul for ever. Faith will indeed cease in regard to certain things, of which there will be experience; as, for example, the realities of heaven and hell, the transactions of the judgment, the promised salvation of the soul through Christ, the rewards of the righteous and the retribution to the wicked; faith in Christ likewise, as our atoning Saviour, will be changed into sight and knowledge. While present in the body, and absent from the Lord, we walk by faith, not by sight. We have access to God by faith, we wait for the hope of

righteousness by faith, we are saved by hope and faith; for hope which is seen is not hope, and our hope, as yet, is seen only by faith. In all these respects, when the soul in heaven beholds the Saviour face to face, it will then live by sight and knowledge, though now it lives only by faith, and possesses knowledge only by faith.

But the sight and experience of the soul in all these respects will only prepare it for a greater exercise of faith than at present it is capable of. All things which at present are not known by sense are matters of faith. Even our belief in God's existence at present is partly faith, rather than knowledge only, for so the word of God represents it. He that cometh to God must *believe* that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him.

It is faith founded on evidence, by which evidence that which may be known of God at present is manifest in us and to us by his works and his word. But as yet no man hath seen God at any time. So that, as yet, our belief in the existence of God is partly of the same nature with our belief in the existence, for example, of Moses. We have never seen Moses, and yet we believe in his existence. But if we *had* seen him, had been acquainted with him, had dwelt with him in life, had observed him, communed with him, walked about with him, heard his words and seen his actions, our belief in his existence would be knowledge, it would be a belief which we could not help, a belief founded on the evidence of experience, which is always irresistible. *So* we have never seen God. We see indeed his works; we are ourselves his workmanship, and this we know; but we know it, as yet, by faith and reason, not sight, not such experience as we are yet to have. In the same manner we believe in Christ, and in him God is revealed to us more clearly than ever before, so that by our faith in Christ we have a greater faith in God; and all the evidence by which Christ is made known to us is additional evidence in regard to God. But we have never seen Christ; all our acquaintance with Christ,

as yet, is by faith; whom, having not seen, says the apostle, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet *believing*, ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Now this faith, beginning in faith, and passing from faith to faith, becomes a life, a knowledge, and a discipline of faith and life for the life to come. This is brought to view in those two grand passages concerning the gospel of Christ, in Romans i. 17, and 2d Cor. 4th chapter and fifth. For I am not ashamed, says Paul, of the gospel of Christ. For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. For therein the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith. This faith in God's righteousness as revealed in Christ passes into knowledge and life in the heart, when God shines into it, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. This living faith has all the power of knowledge, all the practical effect of knowledge. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken, we also believe, and therefore speak; *knowing*, adds the apostle, KNOWING, that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also *by* Jesus. And again, for we KNOW that if our earthly house, &c. And again, we are always confident, KNOWING, &c. Now here we have faith passing into knowledge and life, even in this world. It is not *absolute* knowledge, but it prepares the soul for an introduction *into* such knowledge. It is a discipline of preparation, the discipline of believing, and of life *by* believing, here in this world, for absolute knowledge, the knowledge and the life of actual, sensible experience hereafter.

And then again, that absolute *knowledge*, for which the soul is prepared by a life of faith here, is to be the ground, in connexion with this precious discipline, of still higher *faith* hereafter. For the life of heaven is to be a life of faith, for which all the previous discipline of the soul was necessary to prepare it. It is not to be a life of salvation only, though salvation is declared by the apostle to be the

end of our faith. And, considered with regard to redemption from sin, and from the world of woe, and admission to heaven, in the company of the blessed, in the likeness of Christ, it is the end, the perfection, the consummation, the completion and issue of our faith. But this end of faith is not so much the close of one dispensation, as it is the beginning of another, to which the whole of the preceding was preparatory. The faith itself, as a discipline, and the salvation, which is the issue of that discipline, are but the stepping-stones to the life higher still, of knowledge and of faith, in and for the glory of God.

But it may be asked, or some may be disposed to ask, what *can* there be higher than salvation? And we may answer that salvation is but the beginning of a life in God, a life of faith, and of the beholding and acquisition of God's knowledge from faith to faith, in which a kind and degree of faith shall be requisite of which we cannot now conceive, and for which we are not now prepared, and could not be prepared in any other way than by our present discipline of faith unto salvation. There may be manifestations of God hereafter to the spirits in bliss, which will require a state of salvation wrought out by the precious discipline of faith, before the soul can have a capacity of faith large enough to begin to receive those manifestations. So that if to fallen beings God had begun to manifest himself by sight instead of faith, it may have been a thing in the nature of things impossible that salvation should ever in that way have been attained. God must be to us a God who for the present hideth himself, in order that it may be possible for us to be prepared for his revelation of himself hereafter to our experience. So that this may be a satisfaction to the mind, if at any time it be inclined to wonder why God takes, as it sometimes seems, such roundabout and distant ways of bringing the soul to himself, or why he does not come out of his place of invisibleness, and cause the very sense of his creatures to see and know him, or why he does not present himself in such tangible,

irresistibly impressive forms to the human soul, as to make it impossible that any creature should ever fall into, or experience, any insensibility in regard to his attributes.

For, suppose for a moment that he *should* do this to a creature not disciplined by faith; suppose that for a season, in order to convince the soul of the tendency of sin, and the certainty of its penalty, and of his perfections as against the sinner, he should follow every sin with its penal consequences, making the soul *feel* the fires of divine justice; and suppose that instead of requiring such a soul to *believe* that God is, and that he will call all men to an account, he should, for the present, manifest himself in unquestionable miracles, dealing with every soul by the present individual experience of his own power; even then it is evident that this would not produce faith, nor prepare the soul for the exercise of faith, which would remain in exercise only so long as the experience continued, but the moment it should be withdrawn, the moment God should require the soul to believe *without* experience, it would again wait *for* experience, and would not believe until again experience should come. It is on this ground that our Blessed Lord assures us that, if men will not believe on the ground of God's Word, they would not, also, though one rose from the dead. And this kind of faith is also the very faith of devils, who, there is reason to suppose, cannot and do not believe anything but by experience. And in this point Satan changes into his own nature the soul of every unbeliever, whose mind he succeeds in blinding to the light of the gospel, by experience of the delusions of sense.

So that, in the nature of things, the soul *cannot* know God, but by faith. The bare *experience* of God is not knowledge of him, but only faith is; for the devils have experience of God, but no knowledge of him, nor affectionate belief in him, for himself—the belief which is confidence, which is knowledge, which is life. So that, if you should now stop the experience of the devils in the world

of woe, if you should stop their sufferings, and leave God presented as he was before, there would still be no production of faith in him; all the experience of the devils would not have taught them faith. Faith alone can prepare the soul *for* experience, can teach the right use *of* experience, and can make experience a discipline of knowledge and of life.

And this shows us a view, in which the unbeliever, the infidel, the professed atheist, the man who denies everything which he does not himself experience, comes singularly near, even in this world, to the character of devils as described in the Word of God. Infidelity, or a complacent demand of experience, and a determination and habit of being moved only *by* experience, which is the pride of some men's intellects, so far as they deem it a virtue, let them remember, is the virtue of the devil. He was the first unbeliever and liar, the first who taught the doctrine of believing only in what you experience. "Yea, hath God said that ye shall die? But God doth know that ye shall be as gods. I tell you that ye shall experience no evil." Satan would have men believe on his own assertion merely, before experience, even while teaching and persuading men *not* to believe in anything but by experience, not to believe in God's testimony. Satan would have men believe in *his* testimony in preference to God's. And this is just the characteristic both of philosophic, and of ordinary and vulgar infidelity. Do not believe, cries the hiss of the Serpent, without experience. Yea, do not believe, cries Hume the philosopher, without experience. Yea, do not believe, cry the vulgar herd of infidels, without experience. But why? Why *not* believe? Mark the answer. Because *we* assure you that the experience you are required to credit will not follow. Yea, says the hiss of the Serpent, ye shall not surely die. Yea, says the philosophic Hume, there is no life of retribution beyond the grave. Yea, say the whole company of unbelievers, there is no hell, no penal retribution.

Now, mark their requisition, their own enormous tax on your credulity, even while they ridicule the idea of believing on testimony without experience. What ground is it, on which they call upon you to disbelieve all the testimony of the Scriptures concerning the world of rewards and punishments? What ground on which they call upon you *not* to believe? Why, their own testimony, without experience! Who is there of them that has ever gone into the eternal world and found the Bible a falsehood, and then come back to this world to present *experience* as the ground of belief? Who is there that has ever died in his sins, and gone into the eternal world, and there found himself happy, in spite of the Bible, and has then come back to tell his old companions, on the boasted ground of experience, that there is no penal retribution?—that hell is a mere bugbear of superstition, the last judgment a cunningly devised fable, and the wrath of God against sin a false report of his character? And yet they call upon you not to believe without experience. They will believe in Satan, and in Hume, and in their own assertions, without experience, but not in God. They will take Satan at his word, and take the word of any philosophic fool, and swear on the faith of any octavo of denial of the Word of God, without even a pretence to the foundation of experience to stand upon. This is infidelity in all its forms. An enormous tax on the *credulity* of men, even in those very respects in which they warn men *against* credulity, and call upon them to harden themselves against all evidence but that of experience.

But, now, suppose that they themselves have what they could call experience. Suppose that any twelve men among a company of disbelievers in the sanctions of God's word, a company of those who deny the tremendous reality of an endless retribution, were to be carried into the eternal world, and there to find from experience that there was no such thing as a hell, or an endurance of retributive suffering; and suppose that these twelve men could return to

earth with the assertion of what they had seen and known; on what ground could they call upon men to believe *them*, and disbelieve the *gospel*, but the ground of their own testimony? Simply and barely the ground of their own testimony! But on their own present theory of denying everything which cannot be demonstrated by experience, how could they demand that other men besides themselves should believe in *them*, and disbelieve the *gospel*, on the bare assertion of their experience? They have cut away the ground they themselves would endeavor to stand upon. They make belief in *any* testimony absolutely impossible. If they require you *not* to believe in God's testimony, they cannot present you anything in which you *can* believe. The principle of unbelief in eternal realities, as revealed in God's word, logically and consistently driven, cuts you off from the possibility of believing anything in the universe, until you yourself experience it.

And now suppose this were the principle acted on by mankind, what would be the consequence? Why, just this—that the experience of evil, being gained in defiance of God's warning, and as the fruit and penalty of an unchanged evil nature, when it comes, will come too late, and be eternal. It will make you a believer indeed, but a believer to your own destruction, an eternal believer in evil, and in nothing else; a believer by the force of despair. And that is the very point of such infinite consequence. The evil of which you are forewarned of God, being required *now* to believe it on God's testimony, and so to escape from it, is *eternal* evil. It is just what exists, has existed, and will exist for ever, as an inevitable result of the nature of things, wherever there is an evil being. And the requisition of infidelity, that you believe it not, except on experience, is just the requisition that you hazard its *eternal* experience, that you plunge into its eternal possession.

Now, then, if you would ever have experience of good, it must be by faith both in good and evil. You must believe in the good, and now secure it; you must believe

in the evil, and now avoid it. If you do not believe in the one, you will not and cannot in the other; and if you *believe* in *neither*, you will have *experience* of the *evil*, to the exclusion of the good, to your own everlasting destruction. God forewarns you of the evil, that you may believe in that, and, obeying his directions, may not experience it. God promises you the good, that you may believe in that, and guided by his directions may experience it for ever.

Look now on the other side. In the introduction of sin and unbelief into our world, he who was a liar and murderer from the beginning said to our first parents, "Ye shall not surely die, but God knoweth ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." In that there was tremendous truth, as well as the first universal lie. It was a sardonic, malignant, bitter irony of truth, poured like a jet of infernal fire, from the devil's experience. *Ye shall be as gods.* But what kind of gods? The devil and his angels, the fallen angels! No beings in the universe knew evil, but those who knew sin; none others *could* know it. The angels of heaven were in that blissful ignorance in which Adam himself was created, ignorance of everything but good. The devil and his angels had fallen by the commission of sin, from that blissful ignorance into the eternal knowledge of evil. And now they would have Adam fall likewise, fall by sin into the same abyss of progress in knowledge, becoming like the gods in hell, knowing both good and evil. It was, indeed, an advancement in knowledge! The inhabitants of hell *did* know more than those of heaven; and if they *would* have it, they were welcome to have it all to themselves; none else desired it. They knew both good and evil; *had* known *only* good, and *now* knew *evil only*, and for ever. In heaven the blissful angels still know only good, and to know the evil, they must ruin their own souls, must go down to hell as sinful, ruined beings. It was in this way that Satan would make Adam a god; would have him to know both good and evil; good by the loss of it, evil by the possession of it.

Adam did not need faith in the good; it was his already. But faith in the evil he *did* need, faith in God's word in regard to the evil; and God required it of him, as the only way of keeping the good. But now since the fall, having lost the good, we need faith in the good as well as the evil, belief in regard to both, founded on God's word; because we do not, as yet, know either *as eternal.* We need faith in God's promises as to the one, and faith in his threatenings as to the other; and by acting according to our faith, we shall, through Christ, inherit the one, and be saved from the other, shall know the good eternally, and be freed from the evil eternally.

Now, then, we return to the point from whence we started, that faith is a discipline of the soul, essential to its preparation for a life of blessedness in the world to come. It is God's arrangement in Christ, that we should be saved by faith, and by faith in him only; but that is not all; the *discipline* of faith and the *principle* of faith are necessary in our own nature, as without that, though there may be a heaven in the universe, there can be none in our souls. We must carry the elements of heaven, the rest of heaven into heaven with us, or we shall find no rest there. We shall know evil *only,* in the eternal world, if we do not know Christ in this world. And how astounding is the insensibility of the multitudinous souls of men to this truth! They hear it, as if it no more concerned *them,* than the question does whether the star Sirius is inhabited. If there were the least degree of sensibility, though but enough to dictate the turning of a look, with the utterance of a prayer, towards Christ, there might be hope; and in the least struggling *of* the soul after *him,* there may be the commencement of a life of faith *within* the soul. Yea, when the soul, feeling its utter destitution of anything like faith, begins to struggle towards Christ *for* faith, there may be in that first faint struggle the predetermination *of* faith, the beginning of God working in the soul both to will and to do. And this is a wonderful encouragement, even in times

of general, yea universal neglect and indifference on the subject of religion; encouragement for the soul to begin. Yea, we had almost said, do anything else except do nothing; begin, though in the faintest degree; and in that beginning there may be God, there may be Christ, there may be heaven.

O Lord, how should thy servant see,
Unless thou give me seeing eyes?
Well may I fall, if out of thee!
If out of thee, how should I rise?
I wander wide without thine aid,
And lose my way in midnight shade.

O let my prayer acceptance find,
And bring the mighty blessing down;
Eyesight impart, for I am blind,
And seal me thine adopted son;
A fallen, helpless creature take,
And heir of thy salvation make.

CHAPTER IV.

Faith followed by the Earnest of the Spirit.—The distinction between Faith, Knowledge, and Experience.—Neither Faith nor Experience possible, if Experience be demanded first.—Reproductive power of Faith, and its reduplicating processes of growth.—Connexion between the Earnest of the Spirit in the Church, and the conversion of souls from the world.

It is quite impossible to give a better definition of Faith than Paul has done in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews; and yet, in that definition there might seem at first sight to be almost a confusion between the act of the soul itself, and the realities in reference to which that act is exercised. And in fact there is a sense in which genuine faith *creates* as well as *apprehends*, the objects which it must realize. Faith is belief in God's testimony, followed by experience. The order, as we have seen, is set forth in 2d Cor. iv. 13, thus: We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken, we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing, &c. The knowing follows the belief, and the speaking follows the knowing, as pressed on and impelled by it. The *knowing* following the *belief*, is the Word of God as fire in the soul, yea, as the prophet Jeremiah calls it, as a fire in the bones, that must for very relief break out into a flame, and burn upon other souls, yea, upon the whole world. It is a constraining impulse, a life, a power, inward, from God, and therefore unconquerable, irresistible.

"In whom also, *after that ye believed*," says Paul to the

Ephesians, "ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the Earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory." This is a wonderful passage. The Earnest of our inheritance means the experience of it, in some measure beforehand, ministered with Faith by the Holy promised Spirit, until the time when, by redemption completed, it shall come to be held in actual everlasting possession. Thus God gives us not *mere* testimony, though it be his own, but experience also, and the *evidence* of experience, abundantly, in the Christian life, in the Christian system, which is a system of *life*, not a *theory*. But experience does not come first, it is not the first thing. Faith in God comes first, faith in God's testimony; then experience is the fruit of faith. First comes belief in the things revealed of God, because God testifies of them, because God declares them. Then comes knowledge, the knowledge of experience, growing out of faith. In some things, it is true, experience does come first, is the first thing; and faith, in accepting it from God, simply gives it shape, and possesses it in a perfection and completeness of truth, which God only himself possesses and can impart. As, for example, men know by experience their own sinfulness; that is not an article of faith first, and knowledge afterwards; but God's word teaches the same thing, only in clearer light, and as a universal truth, and with a perfection and power, which God's testimony only could impart. And faith, receiving this truth, which was partially known before, from God, knows it now with incomparably greater clearness and certainty. So that, after all, there is, even beforehand, enough of experience to begin the Christian system with that, and not with faith; and indeed in one direction we do begin with that, and appeal to that, and from that carry the sinner to God.

But in regard to things beyond our present, limited, unassisted experience, we must begin with faith, and come to experience afterwards. And faith itself produces

knowledge, the knowledge of experience; it is the substance and life of knowledge, the demonstration of things not seen. Let us endeavor to illustrate. I have a near and dear friend, we will say, a Father, so good, so kind, so true, so holy, so completely under the influence of heavenly principle, and so bent upon my best good, that I have a confidence in him, which could not be surpassed by any knowledge of my own. If he were to tell me anything for my good, which I did not know before, or could not know without his telling it, it would answer for me all the purposes of knowledge. It would be in me as complete, actual, and active knowledge, as if I myself had seen it. Now this is because I believe it, because I believe my Father. I believe him, and therefore *know* what he tells me, because it is the truth. But a stranger, not acquainted with my Father, not having confidence in him, does not believe him in this manner, and therefore, though told by him precisely the same things, and for his good, does not know those things. He knows them in one sense, because he has been told them, and they are true. But in another sense he does *not* know them, and cannot tell another person that he knows them, because he does not *believe* them. He demands experience of them, before he can consent to know them.

Again: You have before you a vase or jar containing hydrocyanic acid in a preparation of the strongest alcohol. A person enters your room, whom you know to be inveterately addicted to strong drink. While he is there, you are called away; but you take care, before leaving him, to tell him that the jar contains the most deadly of all known poisons, a single drop of which would destroy life. "I have told you this," you say to him, "and you know it; therefore touch it not, at your peril." "But I do not know it by any means," the man answers; "you tell it me, indeed, but I do not know it; and how can I know it, but by trying it, or seeing it tried." "You do know it," you answer, "because it is true, and I have told it to you,

and whatever truth you hear and understand, you know." "But I do *not* know it," the man answers, "because I do not *believe* it." And truly, if the man does not believe it, then in one sense he does not know it, while in another sense, the thing being true, and having been told him, he *does* know it. And the probability is that such an impression of knowledge will have been made upon him by your manner and words, that though he says he does not believe you, yet he will not touch the jar. In that he will act upon belief, without what he calls or deems to be knowledge. But if, against whatever you have told him, he tastes of the liquid and dies, you would say he knew better, he died against knowledge.

But belief does not in itself *constitute* knowledge; nothing but *truth* constitutes that, and belief is but the apprehension and reception of it. The belief of things that are *true* is knowledge; the belief of things that are *false* is not knowledge, though it be ever so firm a belief. The *knowledge* of things that are true, *without* belief, is dead knowledge, knowledge without life. It is only belief that imparts life and power. Nothing but belief can make a man *feel* that he knows. And thus it is with faith in God, faith in divine things. Knowledge without it is dead, and inefficacious for anything but condemnation. Revelation without faith is the world's condemnation.

Sense always produces belief, at least while the experience of it lasts, but knowledge does *not* always. An ignorant man in torrid climes, who never saw snow or ice, hears that at the North by the effect of cold the water becomes as hard as a rock. Now having heard that, and it being true, does he not *know* it? Yet he does not *believe* it, and therefore he does not feel that he knows it, and cannot use it as knowledge. But, set him down by a pool of water at the North, in an atmosphere thirty degrees below the freezing point, and let him see and feel the process, and then handle the ice, and he will both know it and believe it. He will not only know it, as he knew it when it was

told him, but he will *feel* that he knows it. The experience of it will produce belief, when mere knowledge would not. Experience *compels* belief, takes away all volition from it, all possibility of the exercise of confidence apart from sight.

Now this sense or experience in earthly things is analogous to the sealing of the spirit in heavenly things; only, while in earthly things it goes before belief, in heavenly things it follows. It follows the confidence of the soul in God as a Father, in Christ as a Saviour. That confidence of the soul in God sets it upon the rock of reality, makes it *feel* the truth, and walk upon it, as a swimmer, shipwrecked and almost exhausted, feels suddenly the hard bottom beneath his feet, and speedily stands upon dry land. So faith takes the soul out of the sea of doubt, and places it upon the Rock of Ages. Thus faith is the substance of things hoped for.

There is, therefore, both the evidence of faith, evidence *for* faith, and the evidence of sense, in the Christian system; but if sense or experience be demanded *first*, if it be sought and insisted on *before* faith, before the soul will believe, then there can be neither faith nor experience. God is before sense, God is the ground of sense itself, God is the author of sense; and the things of the Christian system are brought from God to sense, addressed *by* God to the inward sense *of* God in all mankind. Faith in God will accept God's voice, God's Word; will believe it, and will wait for experience; but believing it, *knows* it, and *has* experience, the earnest of the Spirit. But the demand for experience *first*, doubts God, dishonors God, exalts man above God, puts the testimony of man, of sinful self, above that of God. It says, we will accept of nothing as from God, till it be sanctioned, confirmed, endorsed, made credible, from man, by man's experience. This is the blindness and absurdity of unbelief; this is sense, shutting itself up to sense, and making faith impossible. It is just as if you should turn the Cathedral of Strasbourg

upside down, with the steeple in the earth and the foundations in the air.

The temple of our faith and experience is built on God; it can be built on nothing else. God's Word, and faith in God's Word, is its broad immovable foundation; experience is the spire, rising into heaven; growing more slender as to sense, more spiritual, more above sense, more imperceptible to sense, gazing at it from below, more like a line or gossamer web in the air, yet more true, more certain, more definite, lost in the skies, because ascending to a height which sense cannot reach. We lay the foundations, ascend the dome, and climb the spire; and thence faith again, renewed and strengthened by an experience growing out of faith, gazes into heaven, balances her wings on the highest point of experience given this side of heaven, and from that point takes her flight to the throne of God in glory. But if the soul had refused to begin, except with experience, the experience of self instead of the Word of God, the progress would have been downwards, *into* the earth, not *out* of it; away from heaven, not towards it, but down towards hell. Progress towards God, conquest over self, and advancement in divine things, is impossible except by faith.

By another figure, faith is the root, experience the fruit; and faith says to experience, Thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Faith draws her nourishment from the parent soil, the heavenly, life-giving Word, into which her roots strike so deep, that you cannot tear them away without tearing the Word away, and from which you cannot separate them without destroying life; faith is nothing apart from God's Word. But, growing out of God's Word, quickened by God's Spirit, faith rises into a tree, and produces the fruits of experience. Then again from the seeds of those fruits, once more planted, from the experience produced by faith, and striking down again into the same heavenly soil, there springs a greater faith, and more abundant fruit, till there is a forest that shakes like

Lebanon. Faith reduplicates itself, and is multiplying by experience: to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly. But unbelief, or the demand for experience first, as the ground of faith, is self-destructive, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have. Faith is *from* God and *in* God, and so produces the *work of* God, a holy experience of God in self; but experience without faith is from and in self only, and is for ever, just what mere self is, sinful; and produces only what mere self produces, unbelief and death. The water can never rise higher or purer than the fountain.

It is just as if God should offer you a grain of wheat, telling you that if you will take it as his gift, and plant it on his assurance, it will grow up and produce a thousand grains. If, believing God, you take it and plant it, then the thousand grains are yours, your experience; and again out of them your living faith may have a hundred times as many thousand grains, and again out of them a countless harvest. But if you say, I must see the thousand grains promised and predicted, before I can believe, before I can take the first grain and use it, then you can *have* nothing, and are *worse* than nothing, and must die. Rejecting reliance upon God, there is nothing but death left possible.

Faith, in its reproductive power and process of growth, may be compared to the great Oriental Banyan Tree. It springs up in God, rooted in God's Word, and soon there are the great waving branches of experience. Then from these very branches the runners go down again into God's Word, and thence spring up again, new products of faith, and new trees of experience, till one and the same tree becomes in itself a grove, with pillared shades and echoing walks between. So experience just grows out of faith, and then a greater faith grows out of experience, the Word of God being all the while the region of its roots, and again a still vaster, richer experience grows out of that faith, till every branch becomes not only a product,

but a parent stock, set in the same Word, and all expanding into a various, magnificent, and enlarging forest. "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God? He that believeth, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the Spirit they should receive."

Thus it is that experience is founded on faith, not faith on experience. I receive not testimony from man, said our Blessed Lord. And indeed, if men will not believe God, how *can* they believe, on man's testimony, anything in *relation* to God? They cannot, in relation to the God of the Scriptures, but in relation to the god of their own fancy they can and do believe themselves and others. They invest God with other and different attributes than those exhibited in his Word, and then they rely on human testimony that such must be the God of the Universe. But true faith, in all cases, is faith in God, not man. Faith in Christian experience is faith in God, not man, God working in man. When we see souls sealed with the earnest of the Spirit, we see one of the greatest of God's works, we look upon one of God's witnesses, or rather, one of the forms under which God witnesses of himself. Here is another temple of God, and in the architecture we see the hand of God, and know the Spirit of God. This is God himself at present witnessing to his own Word. As it was said, They went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following, so now; it is not man's testimony, but God's, which he thus confirms. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." And this earnest of the Spirit is God's witness of himself in his Word. To his own children it is experience vouch-

safed. It is like taking them into heaven, and letting them see. It is to all what the experience of the three in the Mount of Transfiguration was to them; what Paul's being caught up into the third heaven was to him: an additional revelation from God for faith to stand upon, an additional argument of impulse and power to carry the soul onward in its path of light, until the day of eternal reality. "We are his witnesses," says Peter, "and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." There cannot be a depth and power of experience deeper than that of this Earnest of the Spirit, nor indeed anything equal to it. It produces faith, it opens God's Word more and more, as windows in heaven, prepares the soul to preach it, to stand upon it with a more steadfast confidence, it makes the soul more and more mighty in God. Out of an intense practical understanding of God's Word, and experience of it as a fire, this Earnest of the Spirit prepares the soul to labor abundantly for God. This is that to which David referred when he prayed, "Restore unto me the joy of thy Salvation and uphold me with thy free Spirit; then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." This is that seal of God. This is a grand proof of God's message. Just as a document of state is proved to be such by being sealed with the king's signet, or the great seal of the government, so this is proof that God is there, that the Word is his Word, and the work his work, the manifestation being that of his Spirit.

And God would have his people, his Church, present their own experience, their Earnest of the Spirit, as a great corroborative argument for coming to God, a proof to the world what wonderful things grow out of his Word, received in faith. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." It is like a Physician offering to heal the people, and calling upon many who have been healed to testify as to the efficacy of the course of treat-

ment. But if the cure be doubtful, if the old disease return again, if there be not the joy of health, the activity of renewed life and vigor, if the lame man, who was supposed to have been cured, is still seen with his crutches, if the palsied are still lying helpless on their beds, there is no argument for faith here. Hence, the great responsibility upon the Church to show to the world a lively, active, fruit-producing piety, to walk as children of the light, to be witnesses for God, a chosen generation, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. If not such, there is a betrayal of Christ, instead of a witnessing for him. "The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table."

But faith, personal faith is requisite. *After that ye believed* ye were sealed. And that Holy Spirit with which ye were sealed is the Earnest, a part of the covenanted and anticipated gift in glory, and a preparation for it. It is the experience of heaven beforehand, a foretaste of heaven, an Earnest of the inheritance of the saints in light, a sending forward of the soul, as it were, into heaven, to come back and report. It is evidence from the eternal world; it is a sign like the raising of one from the dead; it is indeed the raising of a dead soul, to speak as living. It is not man's evidence, but God's; God speaking in man; the Holy Spirit, given of God to them that obey him, being God's witness of himself.

The evidence of a man merely carried into heaven and brought back again, would be man's evidence, not God's; the evidence of a man plunged into hell and brought back again, would be man's, not God's. It would be mere human testimony. But the evidence of those sealed with the Holy Spirit is God's evidence continued; it is just simply the predictions in his Word fulfilled, and it is all from him. It is not man endorsing God's Word, but it is God's own voice, confirming his own Word; God's voice from God's Temple in the soul, calling upon men to enter

the Temple of the Word, and to hear his voice, and receive the Earnest of his Spirit, there. It is like the preaching of Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, directing men to the preaching of God's law, and to that of the prophets, who prophesied beforehand the coming and the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. It is God, varying and corroborating his own testimony, God his own Interpreter, God his own Witness.

Now this Holy promised Spirit, this Earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, is committed to the Church, is vouchsafed to Christians, for the praise of the glory of Christ our Saviour. And the more of it the Church possesses, and the more individual Christians possess, the more visibly the glory of the Redeemer shines, and the more the world is attracted by such a radiance; the more signally and tangibly the Word of God is demonstrated, and the weight and meaning of its great incomprehensible texts of glory are somewhat manifested and brought even to the reach of sense. We ought to be able to show to the world a great degree, an even fresh supply, of this Earnest of the Spirit, this coin of heaven, this fruit from the tree of life, these leaves for the healing of the nations, this water from the river of Paradise, this experimental proof of our inheritance in glory. How otherwise can we win the attention of men absorbed in earthly cares, and seeking earthly treasures? How otherwise can we allure to brighter worlds and lead the way?

If a man should come into the city from California, from the gold region said to be in existence there, bringing with him twenty pounds weight of gold in the shape of the flakes or grains in which it is described as being found, and inviting poor miserable adventurers to go with him on a new expedition, he would perhaps gather thousands of disciples, when, if he came without his baskets of gold flakes as the earnest of the great treasures the company would possess, he might not gain one. And just so, the

Church of Christ will have power over men just proportioned to the glory of that Earnest of her inheritance, which she has in present possession. Just so much of the Spirit of heaven as she now possesses, just so much of the joy of God's Salvation as belongs to her, just so much of the glory of a glowing experience in the deep things of God as is manifest in her, just so much as she can show, prove, demonstrate, of a revelation of the things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, which God hath prepared for those who love him; just so many more souls will she be capable of drawing to her Saviour. This is the great principle of David's prayer, Restore unto me the joy of thy Salvation, and uphold me by thy free Spirit; then will I teach transgressors thy ways, AND SINNERS SHALL BE CONVERTED UNTO THEE.

CHAPTER V.

Effect of unbelief upon the Character.—Illustrations of unbelief in the Pharisees and Sadducees.—Absolute necessity of relying on God's testimony.—Purpose for which that testimony was given, that by faith we may avoid the experience of evil, and secure the experience of good.—Comparison of the experiment of faith, and the experiment of experience.—Faith alone can lead the soul to heaven; experience alone leads it down to hell.

If the Divine be not acknowledged and reverenced, what becomes of the human? If God's witness of himself be not received, there can remain to be developed in the human character nothing but a spirit of universal distrust, bitterness, and hatred. The likeness of the devil comes out, both in classes and individuals, when man lets go his hold on God and heaven. A man *knows* himself to be a liar, and *believes* all others to be the same. The unbelievers in Christ, when he was personally on earth, illustrated in their own character the malignant influence of scepticism upon the soul. They were proofs of what Christ had said respecting men enjoying a great light of evidence, but rejecting it; it became darkness. And if the *light* that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness! "The fearfullest penalty," remarks Mr. Carlyle, "a man pays for yielding to untruth of heart, is not to know true from false, when he looks at them."

It was a carping, bitter set of men, an envious and jealous set, an evil and adulterous generation, which, when Christ was upon earth, always sought a sign. The Pharisees were formalists and hypocrites; the Sadducees were semi-infidels; both were unbelievers in Christ. They

would not receive the testimony of God respecting Christ. The Sadducees would not receive the testimony of God respecting a future state; the Pharisees were at swords' points with them in this latter article; but both classes were united in refusing God's testimony in regard to the Messiah, or rather in rejecting the Messiah of God's testimony; and so a common enmity against Christ brought them together. They rejected the counsel of God within themselves, not being baptized with the baptism of John unto repentance, not relishing the self-humbling doctrines of the gospel, not being prepared by humility of heart, to see their glory and beauty, and to believe them.

They came sometimes to taunt and tempt Christ in regard to the evidence on which they concluded they would possibly receive him, or might possibly be induced to believe. But they must have everything palpable to their own senses. Theirs was the experimental philosophy of common sense, the coolness of enlightened minds, and not the enthusiasm of an ignorant, superstitious rabble. Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him? Aye, answer us that. But this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed.

We must have demonstration to sense. Come now, and open a window in heaven, raise us a dead man to life, give us manna, as God gave to our forefathers; do something now, here, on the spot, for us, in our presence. The people that you healed yesterday, the bread you created for seven thousand, are nothing to us; we must have present experience and demonstration; we will not take your testimony, nor their testimony, no, nor God's testimony, without sensible, personal, experimental evidence. What sign showest thou then, that we may see it ourselves, and believe thee? What dost thou work? Come, give us a sign, that we may believe.

It was the same bitter, unbelieving, taunting, and malignant spirit, with which the very murderers of our Blessed Lord addressed him, suffering, dying on the cross. If

thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Aye, if he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. And they would not have believed, even if he *had* come down.

Now this was an evil spirit. There was no sincerity of inquiry in it, no desire after the truth, no preparation for it. It was an evil and adulterous generation that thus sought after a sign. Part of the people ran after the miracles, as they would after the tricks of a magician, or after an alchemist who could produce gold. Ye seek me, not because ye see the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. To such a spirit it would have been folly for Christ to repeat the demonstrations of his divine power and majesty. Suppose for a moment that a messenger as an old prophet were among us, proving his divine mission by miracles, converting stones into bread; and suppose that a multitude of persons should run after him, with baskets on their arms, calling for signs, begging for the repetition of his miracles, that their baskets might be filled with loaves: would he do right to work a single miracle for such a temper? or, for the spirit of taunting and unbelief and idle curiosity, demanding the display of miraculous power? Would God condescend to notice that? Would it be just to gratify that? But if one came, humbly waiting to see if it were really God that was speaking, God that was sending his Word, if one came to examine and to see and to listen, waiting on God, and comparing all things with his Word, and earnestly imploring his guidance, that would be a very different spirit. God might regard that spirit, and might bring that soul, in his providence, where it would find an irresistible evidence, that would clear all doubt. But no just evidence is clear to a carping, unbelieving spirit, to a heart unwilling to receive divine truth on God's testimony.

Now the characteristic of unbelief and infidelity is to take nothing on God's testimony merely, nothing without

experience. And, of course, unbelief is death. There is nothing within the whole compass of our reasoning plainer than this. God's testimony is given to faith, on the one side, that believing, we may *avoid* experience, the experience of evil; on the other side, that believing, we may *secure* experience, the experience of good. If God's testimony be not received, if there be not faith in it, and action upon it accordingly, there follows inevitably, on the one side, the *sufferance* of the thing for the *avoidance* of which the testimony was granted, that is, the eternal experience of evil; and on the other side, the *loss* of the thing for the *gaining* of which the testimony was granted, that is, the eternal loss of all good, of heaven's blessedness. Without belief in God's testimony, and action accordingly, there is neither preparation for, nor possibility of future blessedness. All active life springs from faith, and without faith there is no action. It is faith, in some form or another, that drives forward the whole business of existence. But if there be faith in self alone, and in present existence, there is *action* for self alone, and for present *enjoyment*. A man whose creed is *experience* alone, and not *faith*, will go no further than present experience and faith in himself will justify. Of course he will live and act only for this world, and not for God and eternity. The things of the eternal world are unseen and eternal. They are revealed to faith, and can be known *only* by God's testimony, and so if men will not believe that, and act accordingly, but persist in demanding experience, they will go on with neither faith *nor* experience; they will look only at things seen and temporal, and will believe and act only with reference to this life, and to what they experience here. They will put off acting in regard to the things of another life, until they have the same experience of *that* life that they have of this. But they cannot have that here. They must take God's testimony in lieu of experience, or dare the desperate hazard of going into that life without any preparation for it, trusting self

instead of God; the hazard of going into that life to act upon experience there; whereas experience there, if it do not follow faith here, can be nothing but experience of evil.

For this is the great point of God's testimony in regard to that life, *that both the evil and the good of it are unchangeable and endless*, and, therefore, whatever a man is ever going to do in regard to that life *must be done in this;* in this, or not at all. If good is to be secured in that life, it must be secured *in God's way*, and secured *now;* there is no other way and no other time. And if evil is to be avoided in that life, it must be avoided *in God's way*, and avoided *now;* there is no other way, and no other time. And if men, required to believe God and act accordingly, say and insist that they cannot and will not believe and act except from experience, they just deliberately declare a reliance on self, and a distrust of God; a belief that self is infallible, but that God may be a liar. This is God's own phraseology, or we would not dare adopt and use it; but it is God's. *Hath made God a liar.*

Here is one consequence of unbelief; it puts the being into a moral attitude, and developes a moral state, in which, according to God's testimony, and we may add, man's knowledge (the thing being clear even to reason), if a man dies thus and enters on his eternal career, he is sinful and must be miserable. He is at odds with God on the question which is to be trusted, self or God, and on the question which is to submit, self or God; and the very question which makes him an enemy, launches him into eternity a selfish unbeliever, with a lie thrown in the face of God. He cannot have God's blessing, cannot enter into rest, in such a state; but, under the same law of sin and death, under which he passed through this world, and entered on the eternal world, under that same law he must remain, and under God's curse in consequence. For the experience to which he looked forward to settle the question whether he should change his *course*, whether there

would be any *need* to change it, not deeming God's testimony sufficient, cannot and will not alter his *character*, and, moreover, neither can nor will leave any more opportunity or possibility of change.

This is the second consequence. The experience, against which he was forewarned of God, is experience of *evil*. He was forewarned, that he might *avoid* it, and forewarned of it as *eternal*, and *because* it is eternal, and this life the only *opportunity* of avoiding it. Consequently, if he dares to hazard the test of experience on this question, he does it at an *infinite* hazard, and it is infinite *madness* to do it. The experiment of *faith*, to which God invites him, and commands him, as his only way of salvation, can do him no harm, and even if he should fail, would leave him no worse off than before. But the experiment of *experience*, if *that* goes against him, if he finds by *that* that God's Word was true, is his eternal perdition. It is a thing that seals his destiny, a thing from which he cannot turn back, an experience that, by the very terms of the contract, so to speak, if he enters on it, is eternal, and ruins his soul. The experiment is, whether there be a hell, an endless hell. He says to himself, If there be not, then I have no need to deny myself, and take all the trouble of faith in Christ, submission to the cross, and a belief in all the system of God's revelation, for there is no such danger of ruin as God's testimony declares. But if there be, what then? Why, if there be a hell, then, according to the terms of the contract, he is in it; he knows it, by being an inhabitant of it. If there be, it is too late for him to retract. The experience to which he looked forward, questioning whether there be any fires of evil in eternity, is the experience of hell-fire itself. This is the very *condition* of his *experiment*, and he knows beforehand that if it goes against him, it does so for ever, and he is lost; and yet he dares hazard it.

He hazards it in spite of all the vast array of means which God has set in motion to *prevent* his hazarding it,

and to save him from the necessity of it. He hazards it in the face of Christ and his cross, which is a demonstration to the universe, and not only a provision whereby the soul may be saved, but *demonstration* that without faith in Christ the ruin of the soul is eternal. He rushes to destruction past the law and the cross, the justice and the mercy of God, standing in his way. The arms of divine love, at the expense of the incarnation and death of the Son of God, are stretched across his path to stop him; but he stoops downward, as it were, to avoid them, and darts beneath and beyond them, to plunge himself into that tempest of fire, that experiment of the reality of hell, of which he might know, by the cross of Christ itself, that there could be no more question than of the reality of his own existence as a sinner. But he is gone, gone past recovery; and his soul *knows* the fire of hell, by having its windows opened upon him, and the fountains of its great deep broken up within him. And *so* knowing it, he knows that it is eternal.

Now this was the scepticism and consequent experience of the rich man of Christ's parable, in contrast with the faith and consequent experience of Lazarus. He was, in all probability, a Sadducee. He had questioned or denied the great truth of future endless retributions drawn from the writings of Moses and the Prophets. The testimony of God had not been enough for him. He had questioned the reality of a future state, and so doing, he said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Accordingly, his whole life was, to be clothed in fine linen, and to fare sumptuously every day. But in rejecting the testimony of God, he took upon himself the responsibility of the consequences, if that testimony should be found true. And in hell he met the solution of his doubts, and the eternal end of his scepticism. "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." It was nothing but the world of experience, the world which he had chosen as his own. And now, strange as it may seem, he was

anxious to have the same drama played over with regard to his unbelieving brethren, which he had so often on earth demanded should be played with himself; that is, that one should be sent to them from the dead, for they would not hear Moses and the Prophets. They would not believe on God's Word, but demanded sense and experience. "Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will believe." I should myself have believed, had some dead messenger come to me from this fiery gulf. And the calm, serene, holy majesty of heaven answers, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them. If they hear *not* Moses and the Prophets, neither would they believe, though one rose from the dead."

Now there is no describing, in adequate colors, the madness and the guilt of such infinite presumption. If a man should throw himself into a caldron of red hot boiling potash, saying that he wished to ascertain by experiment whether it would destroy life, no question would be had as to his insanity. If a man should throw himself into the crater of Vesuvius, saying that he doubted the stories told about its fires were *mere* stories, and he wished the testimony of experience; no doubt would be had in regard to *his* insanity. If a man of a company travelling across the country in the direction of the terrible volcanic lake of Kailua, should say to his companions, There is no need of our going such a round-about way to get to the other side; it will take so many hours, and such fatiguing labor; so wearisome an expedition, that for my part I choose to go directly across the lake. But you are mad, his companions would say; you know better; you cannot touch the lake with the sole of your foot without destruction. But I do not believe that, answers the man, and I am determined not to believe, except by experience. Why, thou reckless, thou infinite fool, they might answer him, thou canst not touch thy body to the fire without death, and wilt thou hazard thyself in such madness? But the man thinks he has a garment of asbestos, that

will keep him from burning, and so, while his companions take their way around the borders of the volcano, he marches straight in the direction across it, and perishes. Just this, but infinitely worse, is the madness that dares the experiment of the fires of hell, as a matter of experience.

In the nature of things, in regard to the evil in eternity, of which men are warned, they cannot have the evidence of experience, but must take that of faith, which is given for this very purpose, that that of experience may be avoided, may not be incurred, it being eternal.

We may and must solemnly reflect upon this point. We must call to mind again the great reason why a revelation from God is given at all, which is because the destiny to come is an *eternal* one, because the heaven to be lost, if lost, is eternal, and the retributions to be endured, if endured at all, are *eternal.* We may safely say, that if this were *not* the case, there would have been no revelation, because no need of such an interposition of the Almighty as that revelation supposes and discloses. The human race could as well have gone on and have been saved *without* a revelation as with one. The very *fact* on which that revelation is grounded is the fact of a future state of *endless retribution,* to which this world, according to the character formed in it, is an introduction. What makes God's warnings so awfully impressive is, that they are warnings as to a threatened experience which is endless. There is no return from it, no change of it, after it be once entered. Heaven is changeless in enjoyment, hell is changeless in misery; heaven in holiness, hell in sin. This is what has produced a revelation. This eternity of our future condition has made the Cross a reality; for without it there had been no Saviour suffering, dying, and no need of one. And the cross itself, the system of redemption, this vast, incomprehensible, all-comprehending transaction, demonstrates that eternal retribution, and makes its eternity a reality. The system itself,

the gospel itself, in the character of the sinner, and the character of the Son of God, is such, that if accepted, it secures *heaven* as eternal; but if rejected, is death unto death, and renders *hell* both inevitable and eternal. It is under these circumstances that God has said that there is no way or possibility of salvation except through Christ, and that he has added to this the warning of the Holy Ghost, To-DAY! "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." And why not To-morrow? Because, To-morrow may be ETERNITY, instead of being a new *To-day*. To-morrow, when put in the bosom of To-day, is sacrificed beforehand. The evil that is not believed in, and so felt by faith as present, to-day, will to-morrow, if to-morrow comes, be still less believed in, and still less felt as present. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

> "Not that which full of life, instinct with power,
> Makes known its present being; *that* is not
> The true, the perilously formidable."

Men are on their guard against *that;* men flee from that, because they see and feel it.

> "O no! it is the common, the quite common,
> The thing of an eternal yesterday,
> What ever was, and evermore returns,
> Sterling to-morrow, for to-day 'twas sterling!
> For of the wholly common is man made,
> And custom is his nurse."

Yea, the custom of security to-day makes men feel that to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. Faith in To-morrow, instead of Christ, is Satan's nurse, for man's perdition.

CHAPTER VI.

Sympathy with God and sympathy with man.—Faith in God's Word, faith in God's holiness and justice, and faith in man's guilt, the elements of power in leading the Soul to faith in Christ the Saviour.—Comparison of Edwards and Whitefield.—Comparison of revivals of religion as produced mainly by true sympathy with God, and a regard to his glory, or mainly by sympathy with man and the desire of salvation.

The view we have taken in the preceding chapters concerning the necessity of faith in the evil as well as the good disclosed of God awaiting us in the eternal world, is attended with important consequences as to the elements of Christian power and usefulness. It is manifest that sympathy with God is to be coveted and relied upon rather than sympathy with man. It is manifest that all righteous and truly useful sympathy with man grows out of sympathy with God, and cannot exist without it. Here is the line between a true and false theology, and a genuine and spurious benevolence. Heartfelt benevolence is the child of faith in God; so is all correct theology; we are thrown upon simple faith in God's Word. There must be faith in God, simply and alone, as to the nature and consequences of sin in an untried world, as to God's own feelings towards the sinner and his treatment of him, and as to the eternity of future punishment. There must be faith in God as to all these points, above all human sympathy, and then true human sympathy will proceed out of that faith. But if we begin with human sympathy, and reason from that towards God, we shall believe man rather

than God, we shall color our theology by our wishes and our suppositions of what we think *ought to be*, instead of what we learn from God's Word *is*. This is a habit that destroys faith, which must receive its knowledge of God's government from God himself, not man.

We have *experience* of some things, but for all that lies *beyond* our experience, we *must* trust God. We have experience of *sin* in ourselves, but if our *faith* goes no further than experience, we shall have radically defective views both of human depravity and of its deserts and consequences. We have experience of sin in ourselves, but our *examination* of that experience is necessarily superficial, even *because* of our own sinfulness; and in regard to God's view of sin, and his treatment of it, we are thrown *entirely* upon faith. Hence, the amazing power of great faith in God, which gives a man command of the deepest depths of human experience, and enables him to master an experience in man, on the authority of God, beyond the measurement of individual consciousness, and to wield it as an element of irresistible conviction. Faith in God carries a man to depths of self-knowledge, and knowledge of human nature, otherwise unattainable. A man under the guidance of it may be ploughing into the souls of men in furrows of depravity never before laid open, perhaps unsuspected and unacknowledged, at sight of which the complacent self-consciousness, that would have gnashed its teeth in rebellion, becomes the enlightened, wounded, angry conscience, that indicts the soul in guilt before God.

But there must be faith in God's Word; the source of this *power* is that faith, faith both in God and man *as presented in God's Word*. It is the possession or deficiency of this element of faith in God as presented in his Word, that constitutes power or weakness in the soul; and in the presentation of the subject, produces either unmingled, majestic, overwhelming truth, or a mixture of falsehood. It was this faith in God's Word, and in God as presented

in his Word, that made one of the elements, perhaps the grand element, of irresistible power in the ministry of Jonathan Edwards. It was the deficiency of this faith that made the element of weakness and poverty in the ministry of John Foster, who, powerful and clear as he was in the excavation of the human heart, and the province of religious morality, and splendid as his genius was, in grandeur of imagination, profound thought, and exquisite taste and sensibility, was shorn of his power, and betrayed into lamentable weakness on the point on which he doubted, on the views of God's government and man's destiny, which he did *not* take from the *Word* of God. We bring these two great minds together for illustration. Edwards *believed* and reasoned; Foster *doubted* and reasoned; both reasoned strongly, but Edwards in God's light, Foster in man's twilight. In the light there are nothing but clear, well-defined, not doubtful objects; in the twilight there is gathering gloom and perplexity; you may mistake a man for a tree. Edwards was clear and irresistible, Foster perplexed and hesitating; Edwards had the certainty of God, Foster the uncertainty of man. Edwards accepted the character and administration of God, *as presented in his Word;* he saw God in God's own light, not man's. Foster let it be colored through the prism of the sympathy of man with man; he saw God and his administration through man's miseries and sins, instead of seeing man's sins through God. What an incomparably higher position of observation, light, and power, was that of Edwards!

And here much depends upon personal experience at the outset. Deep conviction of sin, and heartfelt contrition for it, are great helps to faith in God's Word; they make a man take God's part against himself, and against the sinner, instead of taking the sinner's part against God. The truly contrite heart, enlightened as to God's holiness, and filled with his love, rejoices in God's sovereignty, and in all God's judgments. Such a heart speaks of God at once from the secret place of thunder, and the deepest

springs of love. He that is spiritual judgeth all things, while he himself is judged of no man. Sympathy with God gives prodigious power over man; it carries all things before it. While Edwards was preaching his stupendous sermon, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God," it was his high, holy, perfect sympathy with God, that raised him to such a gigantic, almost superhuman effort. The sermon might remind one of the rolling thunder of the fierce chariot of Messiah, as described by Milton, driven, gloomy as night, against the sinning angels, and shaking the steadfast empyrean in its whirlwind round. That sermon was made up out of three mighty elements, which in our time are much wanting: faith in God's Word, faith in God's holiness and justice, and faith in man's guilt. For concentrated, intense, glowing fire and power, it is like what men's ideal might perhaps be of the mightiest of Demosthenes' orations. It is awful beyond expression in its gloomy grandeur, but irresistibly powerful in its onward increasing pressure of truth, which is like that vast volcanic cataract of fire that we have read of in the Sandwich Islands, precipitated over a perpendicular mountain wall of rock, sheer into the ocean.

That sermon was borne out, every sentence of it, by the Word of God; borne out by the demonstration of man's guilt and danger in the fact that Christ died for sinners; and borne out by the words of the beloved and loving disciple, that "he that believeth not the Son of God shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." We think that John, when he used such expressions in the gospel, and repeated them in various forms in the book of Revelations, had quite as much love to God and love to man, as those who, in our day, undertake to criticize Edwards for not properly representing the Divine benevolence. The sermon which he preached, to which we have referred, was in the midst of the great work of God's grace in 1741, and it was honored of God by the imme-

diate conversion of souls. And the truth is that all true, genuine, lasting sympathy for man and benevolence to man must have for its foundation a real and genuine sympathy with God's holiness and justice; if not, it is radically defective. There is a sickly pretence of compassionate and tender feeling, that shudders at such representations of God's justice as are found in the Scriptures; but it is because there is more of sympathy with man as a sinner, than with God as a holy God. Sympathy with God, and a regard to his glory, was at the bottom of the great revival in Edwards's day; sympathy with man has been more characteristic of the revivals in our day. The lack of sympathy with God is that deficiency in Christian character, which makes even true revivals of religion of short duration, and permits the mixture in them of extraneous and superficial ingredients. Sympathy with man makes a periodical and fitful piety; sympathy with God a deepening and enduring piety, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Now it is comparatively easy to play upon men's sympathies, and to stir them deeply and powerfully; but it is not so easy to raise men to adoring, submissive, reverential, and loving views of God's holiness and justice. These two things must be mingled. But whereas the last may be exceedingly powerful with but little of the first, the first will be powerless or useless without the last. And whereas a great degree of the last, a true and deep sympathy with God, will certainly and inevitably be productive of true and deep sympathy with man (though from defect of natural tenderness of sensibility, or want of suitableness of manner and of illustration, it may not so clearly appear), mere sympathy with man is by no means sure of being accompanied or followed by sympathy with God.

The celebrated Whitefield possessed a natural constitutional sympathy with man to a remarkable degree, sanctified by Divine grace, and sustained and carried out by a great and true sympathy with God, and a theology

that abased man and exalted God. Whitefield and Edwards may be advantageously compared, as instances, the first of preponderating sympathy with man, the last of preponderating sympathy with God; but both men of extraordinary piety, extraordinary attainments in holiness, though as to vastness and strength of intellect there could scarcely be a comparison. Whitefield could never have preached Edwards's sermon, "*Sinners in the hands of an angry God;*" it would not have been in his nature, either of mind or heart. He would have been compelled to stop forty times to present the love of Christ amidst the thunders of the law, and to weep and exclaim with his congregation, in tones of sympathizing tenderness and love. And the concentrated, deepening power of the sermon, and its intolerable pressure upon the conscience, increasing to the close, would have been weakened and lightened thereby, while its power over men's sympathies would have been immeasurably augmented. There would have been all the difference, and more than all, that we might, under certain circumstances, conceive between the effect of Old Hundred, or Luther's Judgment Hymn, and a melody like Woodstock, in the words,

> "There is a fountain filled with blood,
> Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

Each of these preachers might have been more powerful by a participation in each other's excellences and peculiar elements of power. Edwards stood nearer to God, Whitefield stood nearer to man. There was more in Whitefield with which an ordinary congregation could sympathize; he was nearer to the level of all men wherever he addressed them; and he possessed a surpassing persuasiveness and eloquence of manner, of which Edwards was almost entirely destitute.

The case of Whitefield's sermon on the text, "When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his

baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers! who hath warned *you* to flee from the wrath to come?" may be compared with that of Edwards on the text, "Their feet shall slide in due time." An irreligious young man, converted through the instrumentality of Whitefield's preaching on that occasion, has given some account of it. "Mr. Whitefield," said he, in relating this passage in the history of his own immortal life, "described the Sadducean character; this did not touch me. I thought myself as good a Christian as any man in England. From this he went to that of the Pharisees. He described their exterior decency, but observed that the poison of the viper rankled in their hearts. This rather shook me. At length, in the course of the sermon, he abruptly broke off, paused for a few moments, then burst into a flood of tears, lifted up his hands and eyes, and exclaimed, 'Oh my hearers! the wrath to come! the wrath to come!' These words sank deep into my heart like lead in the waters. I wept, and when the sermon was ended, retired alone. For days and weeks I could think of little else. Those awful words would follow me, wherever I went, 'The wrath to come! The wrath to come!'" And that sound, and that text, borne into his soul on the thrilling tones of Whitefield's impassioned voice, was God's instrument for that individual's conversion. He made a public profession of religion, and became a very eminent preacher of the gospel.

Now if Edwards had been preaching on that text, he never would have stopped thus, and lifted up his hands and wept; what was nature and habit in Whitefield would have been theatrical affectation in Edwards; he would have gone on steady with God's wrath to the end of the chapter. Unquestionably Whitefield's own sermon, in Whitefield's hands, was more impressive and effective than it could have been in Edwards's hands. But the foundation of its impressiveness was the same ingredient of the wrath of God; and although Edwards had more of sympathy

with God's holiness and justice, and less of constitutional sympathy with man's sensibilities, there was in each the same view of the action of the Divine attributes in regard to sin and the sinner, the same glowing love to Christ, and the same heartfelt compassion for souls consequent thereon.

There was in Edwards a wonderful simplicity and power of faith in God's Word, combined with a vast comprehension of its meaning. There was a wonderful union of faith in God's Word and experience of God's life. These two things grew together, and strengthened and reacted upon each other. Faith in God alone, to a certain degree, may be merely human, but faith in God's Word is divine. A degree of faith in God is perhaps so constitutional, that no man is born into the world and grows up without it. But faith in God's Word is the work of God's Spirit. Faith in God's Word, and that faith in God which springs from his Word as the seed of it in the soul, is the spring of all power. There can be no true faith in God not founded in, and springing from, his Word. Since Christ came, no man cometh to the Father, or knoweth the Father, but by Him; and of Him, the Word is the only revelation. Mere faith in God, or the conviction that God is, and that he judges his accountable creatures, to which degree of belief nature herself may rise, must be, with fallen creatures, mostly, if not merely, *fear*. But faith in God's Word receives God as revealed in Christ, and beholds in him a forgiving God, and when perfected in love, casteth out fear. Belief in God may be a bondage, like the faith of devils; belief in God's Word is a child-like, filial trust in God's attributes; it is the belief of love, the exercise of the heart. It is neither constraint by conscience, nor compulsion by mere argument. It is the spontaneous synthesis of reason and the affections, of logic and love, seeing God in his Word, knowing God through his Word. It knows God, because, with the witness of the Spirit, it sees, hears, knows, the Word.

It hears and knows the Word, because, by the witness of the Spirit, it knows God. "My sheep hear my voice. I know my sheep, and am known of mine." A stranger's voice will they not hear, but the voice of the Shepherd they distinguish and *know*. It is a sensitiveness, a delicacy, a positive knowledge of the heaven-taught soul, which might be called a spiritual, heavenly instinct.

But this faith leads the soul to consult the Word, and not man nor self, for all its knowledge of God's attributes, and of the action of those attributes towards man. Such a soul will not consult *a priori* reasoning, or the sentimentality of mere human sympathy, to see what God will do with sinful man, or what are God's feelings towards the sinner, but submissively and confidently takes God's Word, and sympathizes with God, as there exhibited. This was the grand source of the power of Edwards, and the strength of his theology. He took what he found in God's Word, and proclaimed it, whether men would hear or forbear.

He told men, from God's Word, that God is angry with the wicked every day, and that God hates all the workers of iniquity; a thing which God, as a holy God, must do, and which if he did not do, he would never have given his Son to die for them. For if sin were not so great, so odious, so dreadful and terrible an evil, so malignant against all good, so destructive of the welfare of the whole universe of God, and so opposed to every attribute of God, as to make God of necessity hate the sinner, there would be nothing in sin so terrible as that God could not save the sinner without Christ's dying for him; there would be nothing, indeed, in sin of such a nature as to be absolute perdition to the soul. For there never can be perdition to anybody or anything, on which God's wrath does not lie eternally; and it is impossible that God's wrath should lie eternally on any being or thing, which he does not eternally, and by the necessity of his own goodness, hate.

Therefore, when in John it is said that "he that believeth not the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him," it is merely and only a repetition of what is said in the fifth Psalm, "Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity." God cannot do otherwise than hate them, from the very necessity of his own goodness. Nay, from the necessity of his own mercy and love to the universe, he must hate sinners, because they, as sinners, are living only to the injury and pain and suffering of the universe, and God *cannot* love them. In just as much as God loves the happiness of the universe, and the well-being of the soul, he must hate the sinner. It is *because* he hates the sinner, as a sinner, but knows the value of the soul, and loves the soul, that he has given his own Son to die, that sinners may be saved; and the salvation of sinners is their being brought out from that state of character, in which God could not but hate them, into that glorious and blessed change and state of character, in Christ, in which God can and does love them. And he himself brings them out of that state, and he himself changes and saves them; changes and saves them, because he loves their welfare while he hates their character, and knows that their welfare is impossible, while their character is such that a holy God *must* hate it.

The source of power over man is a living faith in God and sympathy with God, as thus revealed and exhibited in his Word. We must go to the RECORD, and there learn what God is, and what man is; what is due to God's glory, and what is essential to man's good. Without this embedding of the soul in the Word, all our revival piety is convulsive, and needs both reviving and steadying. Without this, it is not so much faith in God, a mighty, calm, deep possession of our souls by the things of the gospel, an oceanic and eternal life, as it is unstable and constitutional sympathy; not so much faith, as it is sight; not so much God and his glory, as it is men and churches. The piety of the Apostles and Reformers was

God-ward; ours is man-ward. Theirs was self-absorption in God, self-crucifixion in Christ, baptism and vitality in God's Word; ours is self-glorification in Christianity as perfecting the world and mankind, evangelization as the remedy of the world's evils, and a living on God's Word from hand to mouth. They took their stand-point in God and the Cross; we ours in man and expediency. They said that God must be glorified, we say that men must be saved. Vastly higher, deeper, broader is the piety that says God must be glorified, than the piety that merely says, man must be saved. A man may, indeed, do much by the last; the last, if genuine, is the fruit of the first; the first comprehends the last, produces it, and is its only source and sustaining energy. A church filled with the first, with a desire for God's glory, and bowed down beneath its power, will move on in the work of the world's salvation with a majesty, a calmness, an unwavering resolution, a steady lustre, and a mighty triumph, while sympathy for man alone will be periodical, fickle, often desponding, and easily perplexed.

These two things *must* be combined; and when God trains a church that truly and thoroughly unites them, it will be the most glorious and powerful exhibition of grace the world has ever seen. It cannot be that the church, intended of God to be the world's true measure and mode, both of time and rest, should ever be swinging, as a vast pendulum, between extremes. And these extremes, in their negation and ignorance one of another, have maintained in the world a series of defective and almost antagonistical presentations of piety; a pretended ecstatic piety in the contemplation of God, which never comes down in sympathy and contact with man's guilt and misery, or a morality and sympathy towards man, which never rises to its only true fountain in the love of God.

The vast *corruptions* of Christianity and of the Church have been occupied in crucifying a *living* Christ; the *formal* preservations and presentations of Christianity and

of the Church have been occupied in embalming a *dead* Christ. The first have been busy adorning, glorifying, and strengthening their despotic hierarchies; the last have been engaged in cutting and drying their dogmatic orthodoxies. Between both, the work of Christ and his Church in this guilty, dying world, to seek and to save the lost, has been fearfully neglected. Now shall at length come the period, when truth shall no longer be tossed in a gorgeous robe between Herod and Pilate, nor crucified by a remorseless hierarchy as a sacrifice for the life of its own despotism, nor laid up for mere speculation, as form without love. In the world, as in individual loving hearts, it shall be Grace and Truth, in the form and activity of Love; a supreme regard to God's glory producing man's highest good.

DEVELOPMENT, DISCIPLINE,

AND

FRUITS OF FAITH.

PART SECOND.

GRACE AND TRUTH.

CHRIST IN THE AFFECTIONS.

WINDINGS OF THE RIVER, CONTINUED.

CHAPTER VII.

The Schoolmaster and the Father.—The Servant and the Child.—Faith produced by the combustion of God's promises with man's sins.

THERE is a great difference between God's light upon the mind, disclosing sin, and God's light in Christ, disclosing grace, pardon, and life. God comes through Moses to the mind and conscience, and makes the soul see and feel the need of Christ, see and feel the burden of sin, which no being but Christ can remove. The Old Testament does not come to any man without the New; no man knows Moses, who may not, by means of Moses, know Christ; neither does John the Baptist, between the Old and New, appear anywhere, crying Make straight the way of the Lord, but the Lord himself is close at hand. John may say to-day, There standeth one among you, whom ye know not; but if any soul will listen attentively, seriously, humbly, to Moses and John, the next day John will be able to point out Jesus, saying, Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the World. While in the maze and horror of conviction of sin under Moses and John, oftentimes all that the soul knows of Christ is that voice of John, There

standeth one among you whom ye know not; and perhaps the soul wonders, Who can it be? Where is he? Oh, that I might see him, might find him, might know him! When the soul has been long enough in that maze and horror of sin and desolation, under the law and rod of Moses the Schoolmaster, and John the Usher, to be beaten down and humbled, groaning beneath the burden of sin, then comes that animating sweet voice, and a bright form rises on the soul with it, Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. The sin of the world? says the soul, then *my* sin. And coming nearer to the gracious being whom Moses and John point out, another voice, sweeter still, speaks to the burdened soul, Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest! That is the completion of mercy, the fulfilment of grace. That voice, truly heard by the soul chastised and beaten down by Moses, and instructed of him and John, finishes the victory, and the soul is at the feet of Christ, its blindness removed, its darkness and its burden gone; the sinner sits there and weeps for joy, clothed and in his right mind.

"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." When Christ is lifted up, that is the end. And Christ's is the conquering voice. Moses and John can point the way, and say to the soul, go! Christ only can say, come! Moses can lift up the brazen serpent, and say, Look, and live! And John, seeing Jesus, can say, Behold the Lamb of God! But Christ only can say, Come unto me! Moses and John can say, This is the way, walk ye in it! Christ only can say, I am the Way, the Truth, the Life. Moses and John can cry, The wrath to come! The wrath to come! Flee from the wrath to come! Christ only can say, Look unto me, and be ye saved! I will give you rest. Moses and John can lay the burden on the soul, Christ only can remove it.

God's light, out of Christ, falling into the mind and conscience, discloses sin; and even by the Cross, if Christ be not

received into the heart, it discloses nothing but sin. Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. The light shining thus alone, is like light in a dark room or dungeon, disclosing all the rats and impurities. But Christ in the mind and conscience, when God has shined into the *heart*, in the *face* of Jesus Christ, is purity and peace, is forgiveness and justification, is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. All this he is made unto us of God; of whom are ye in Christ Jesus, that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. The light upon the mind and conscience condemned by the law, and shut up under it, is to turn it to the promise by faith, and to him who is the object of faith and the source of forgiveness, Jesus Christ. That is Moses, dealing with the soul through the conscience, showing the curse, and crying, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. Not against the promises of God, but to make the soul grasp at the promise and cling to it and come to Christ by it. And then the law-work and the curse-work is done, Christ having redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. And thus to as many as receive that promise, and by it receive him, from whom it comes, and to whom it points, to them he gives the right, the power, the privilege, to become the sons of God, even to them who believe in his name. And thus the great work of Moses and of John is finished, and the soul that was under the rod, the burden, the condemnation, and the bondage, at school to an inexorable master, becomes the child, the heir, prepared for the inheritance, the redeemed and regenerated freeman in Christ Jesus. For the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. And because ye are sons,

God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father. And thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a Son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Now what inexpressible loveliness of wisdom and glory is in this system! Would to God that every soul might follow this experience, might thus trace the blessed way from Moses to Christ; blessed, because it makes the soul hate sin, and because it ends in Christ; blessed, though ever so painful. And there is no reason in the world why every soul should *not* have this experience of Sons, this experience of Moses' schoolmastership leading to Christ; for it is perfectly free to all, and Moses takes all in hand, nor is there any way or possibility of getting rid of Moses and his bondage, but by finding Christ and his love. And as Moses stands over the soul and behind it, beating it, Christ stands before the soul inviting it, and crying, Whosoever will, let him come, and I will give him rest. So it is your own fault, if you do *not* come; it is neither Moses' fault, nor Christ's fault, but your own, and your own only.

Nevertheless, of all that hear the gospel, the vast multitude stay away. Some stay in utter insensibility, even under all the wrath and threatenings of Moses, and all the tenderness and love of Christ. And others stay in bare conviction, and though convinced of sin in some degree, yet do not come to Christ. But all conviction is vain, unless it be followed up by the gospel, by repentance, and faith, and prayer, and Christ taking away sin. Some persons never go further than conviction, and yet often have enough of that to lead them to repentance, if they would go to Christ, and see aright the gospel; enough they have of Moses in their mind and conscience, to know their need of Christ and the way to him. But though they see and know that they are sinners, they take not the means to have their sins removed, and so the convictions, which are now and then renewed, subside again, and leave them as bad as before, and perhaps worse. They are like our street contractors or laborers, who from time to time

sweep up the mud in noticeable piles, but send no carts to convey it away, and in a week's time it is all again spread over the streets as before with additions. So it is with the mire of sin in men's souls, if, on conviction of sin, they do not apply to Christ for its removal.

Moses can do much with the mind and conscience, but Christ only can cleanse the heart, can put the truth into the heart, grace and truth. Moses can make the truth work for our perdition, but Christ only can make it work our life, can make it the light of life. The truth often temporarily makes a great impression on the mind and conscience, but not being lodged in the heart, the fowls of the air come and devour it up. They can easily catch it away before it is rooted. The sermon which on Sabbath evening seemed all light and power to an awakened mind and conscience, not being carried to God for his blessing, not being carried to Christ, for him to give it life in the heart, Monday morning's brightness and gaiety and worldly activity carry it all away. Then the mind wonders where those impressions have gone. They have gone where the *heart* has gone, and *because* the heart has gone, away from God. The cares of life, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things, have choked the word, and the fowls in Wall street, in Pearl street, in Vanity Fair, have carried it off.

The mind, the conscience, the heart, and the life are all concerned together in life-truth. If they are separated from one another, if the connexion between them is broken off, the truth perishes. A steamer may have fuel, and water, and a boiler, and fire, and the steam may be got up; but if it do not pass into the great cylinder, and set the beating heart in motion, it is all a waste. Or if it do not pass from the beating heart to the wheels, to set *them* in motion, it is all a waste. And the vessel may be wrecked, whether at sea or near the coast, by a separation, disconnexion, break, or disarrangement, between any of these parts of the machinery.

Just so it is with truth in the soul. If it stays merely in the mind and conscience, and goes not by Divine grace into the heart, it will just merely *wreck* the mind and conscience, instead of keeping it; it will explode, if it becomes active, and yet is not admitted into the heart. Or again, if it goes not from the heart into the life, it will but condemn and harden and wreck the heart, because it is the truth held in unrighteousness, a thing against which God's seal of reprobation is most fearfully set. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because, that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them, and therefore they are without excuse. Indeed, all truth, that is not obeyed in the life, by living in the affections, condemns the soul, and in the end, if the disconnexion be continued, destroys it. Christ, therefore, must rule in the affections. And for this, a mighty and gradual discipline is requisite, a work which Christ only, by grace, by providence, by truth, can work.

Sometimes God takes one method, sometimes another, and sometimes all methods fail, and the foolish, careless, guilty sinner, regardless of all the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, leading him to repentance, goes on after his hardness and impenitent heart, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of God's righteous judgment. "He goes on *after* his hardness and impenitent heart;" it is a striking expression; he follows the impulses of his hardness and impenitent heart, instead of the leadings of Christ; he pursues after his blind heart, instead of pursuing after God. Some souls bend and break, submissive and penitent, under a discipline which other souls successfully resist. One soul becomes a broken bruised reed under the blows of Moses, and then Christ instantly takes the loving, tender charge of that soul, instead of Moses. Another soul stands up firm and erect, stubborn, like an

upright, stout reed, cased in flint, and growing every day harder and drier. The blows of Moses only harden it more and more, and the tenderness of Christ, and the dews of God's grace, falling about the roots, only seem to be turned by it into tough fibre and silex.

We have known of a blacksmith, notorious for his recklessness and unbelief on the subject of religion, with a heart as hard as his own anvil. There was a revival by God's grace in the village, and a second blacksmith in the same place, who had been a hardened sinner, was converted. One of this man's customers, who did not at all relish this change, came shortly after to the first blacksmith, to have a piece of work done by *him*. Somewhat surprised at this application, the blacksmith said, "How is this, friend John? I thought you got all your work done at neighbor Charles's." "Ah, but he's too good now; he isn't bad enough for me; your shop is the only tolerable one now." The thing struck the man to the heart. It was an unexpected, unintended blow of Moses. He went home, cut through and through to think that he should be considered the worst man in the village, and be patronized by bad men solely on that account. He could not sleep for thinking of it, and was filled with anxiety on account of his sins. He went to the study of the Bible, and to prayer. The sword of the Spirit went into his soul, and he was brought to repentance.

So God works. But some there are, who complain of their own insensibility, and wonder at it, and think they would give much to have it removed, but still, for that operation they do not put their hearts at the disposal of Christ, or into his hands for healing. They are like blind men sitting by the way-side, and making a great outcry over their misfortune, but when the Physician comes that way and calls them, they will not stir one step on their own part towards him. What good would the most perfect dispensary in the world, and the most skilful oculists in the world, waiting in it, do for the blind in a great city, if,

being invited to come and have their blindness removed, they would not come, but would stay away from fear of the operation, or from sheer distrust and indolence?

But in the name of all righteousness, mercy, and truth, is not God himself doing everything for men, to have this insensibility taken away? Does he not thunder with his law, and tenderly persuade them with his gospel, and still will they be like deaf adders, who will not hear the voice of the charmer, charming never so wisely—deaf to the sound both of the wail of hell's torments, and the melody of heaven's music? But if these things do not dispel our insensibility, if all the array of God's providences, and all the terrors of the law, and the majesty and mercy of the Cross of Christ fail to move us, what *can* do it? Would we have God take his rod and shatter us in pieces, or would we have him put a worm in our gourds, and make friends and comforts and health wither and die away from us, or would we have him, when truth and love will not prevail, dip us, as it were, in the burning lake, and make us feel its torments? Yet all the discipline of God in the world, the moment it is taken off, would fail to affect us lastingly, unless by the light of God's truth, under the power of his grace, we come to Christ. All God's discipline with us must come to this, or come to naught.

And the discipline of light itself, in the cross of Christ, is admirably adapted to produce this result. The same light that shows us our guilt, is a light that shows us our Saviour. It is not God as a holy God merely, that shines upon our hearts, our life, our being, our ways. That might be enough to show us our guilt, but it would simply strike us down in despair; for seeing how infinitely holy God is, the clear sight of God would be only a sense of the infinite distance between God and the soul, and of the impossibility of ever passing that gulf of guilt, and getting back to God. But God shines in Christ. And the peculiarity of this light is, that the very arrangement and

nature of it, by which mercy is brought to view, offered and shown to be possible, is an arrangement that increases the demonstration of man's guilt, shows it forth more clearly, and in a way infinitely convincing and affecting.

The light that shows us a Saviour establishes beyond all contradiction the fact of our guilt and ruin, and the greatness of it. And the light that shows the guilt shows the Saviour. Moreover, it is not God's Word barely and alone, to which he shuts us up for evidence ; he does not leave us to that, without other helps to our faith. And this is an extraordinary thing in God's mercy, a wonderful view of it, that God bridges over for us the gulf of our own insensibility and unbelief in regard to Christ, by giving us an experience produced by his Word, even before we have come to Christ. This experience growing out of his Word, though an experience of sin, is nevertheless a plank thrown across the sheer gulf that in our insensibility and darkness separates between us and God. It is the effect of God's light in our own souls, upon our own sins. That first effect of which we have spoken, is to disclose what is within us, what we ourselves are, in contrast with what God is. That being done, and then Christ being revealed, God in Christ, as a forgiving God and Saviour, faith in Christ springs out of experience in ourselves, and out of our own necessity and despair. Faith in Christ is the flame produced by the meeting of the Word of God and our experience, the promises of God and our experience. Our experience is first produced by God's light, God's condemning Word, God's holy law, God's holy self, in contrast and conflict with the soul. Then faith in Christ springs up out of the meeting of God's promising Word with that experience ; God's promises and our sins are the fuel. Out of that heap of fuel, kindled by the Holy Spirit, blazes up the flame of faith in Christ. It is a wonderful arrangement of God's mercy. For, let it be noted, if God left us to ourselves as to the matter of faith in Christ, if he came requiring faith in Christ, before

any enlightening or experience vouchsafed beforehand in regard to our guilt, his Word might preach Christ so for ages, and there never would be faith either in it or in him. That deep, impassable gulf between God and the soul would remain impassable for ever, and none would attempt to cross it. God crosses it in our experience, before we would ever attempt to cross it, or even be aware of its existence. God produces our experience, and lays it down as that bridge for unbelief and insensibility itself to walk upon, that experience of guilt, and so of the need of Christ as a Saviour, and of God's forgiveness in him, out of which, or upon which, the soul comes in faith to Christ.

But that experience itself, we see, would be nothing without God's promises; that is, would be nothing to produce faith, nothing but to produce despair, nothing but to bring the soul to the verge of that horrible gulf, make it look down into it, and then plunge it headlong in despair for ever. So that God's promises in Christ are the piles driven down into that gulf, the piers, deeper and stronger than hell itself, on which that experience of hell may be bottomed, may be flung as a bridge for the passage of the soul in faith towards a Saviour. There it rests, upheld by those foundations. And the foundations which as buttresses and piers sink below, and sustain the shock of all the drift of chaos and of hell against them, rise also as a fence or railing above, to keep the trembling, fearful soul, walking thus upon its own terrible experience towards Christ, from falling over, from plunging into the bosom of despair instead of Christ. This is God's mercy, this is God's infinitely wise and gracious arrangement. Out of death he brings forth life. Out of the materials of sin and hell and despair, he brings a passage to holiness and salvation and joy and life eternal in the Saviour. Out of condemnation in guilt he brings pardon, and out of the grave, victory.

Now God having demonstrated this to us in many forms, might have left us to our own experience and his pro-

mises; and no man could have imagined what more we could ask of him than that; and yet God himself has gone still further. For he has, as it were, thrown down this bridge before our own eyes, and shown us other sinners walking safely on it. There it is in the 32d Psalm, and David going over it. And what is to be thought of the prayer, "For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity, for it is great?" Would it not be the strangest of all strange prayers for a criminal to offer to the government, a criminal guilty of a monstrous murder for example, if he should say, My murder is the worst that was ever committed since Cain's; the most atrocious, the most deliberate, cruel, cold-blooded, inexcusable, and therefore I beseech you for the government's sake to pardon me. And yet that is David's prayer to God, that is the prayer God teaches us to offer for his mercy: "For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." And so David went over the bridge of his own sins into the heart of God's mercy. And there it is again in the 2d Chronicles xxxiii. 12, 13, and Manasseh going over it, that monstrous sinner! But God was entreated of him, and heard his supplication. And there it is again in Luke xv., and the Prodigal Son going over it. And there it is again in 1st Timothy i. 15, and Paul himself going over it, as the chief of sinners, with the same argument, "For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity, for it is great."

And here let us stop one moment and see the progress of Paul's experience. There is a peculiarly beautiful and instructive series of climacterics in it, which has often been noted. In the year of our Lord 59, he is the least of the apostles, and not meet to be called an apostle, because he persecuted the church of God. In the year of our Lord 64, after five years more of growth in grace, he is less than the least of all saints. But in the year of our Lord 65, and not long before he was to receive his crown in heaven, he is the chief of sinners. So a man, as he goes down in self goes up in God, and as he goes up in God

goes down in self. He that began his way to Christ by saying, Lord have mercy upon me, for I am a great sinner, sees more and more, after he has come to Christ, and all his sins are put behind him and forgiven, how great and aggravated they were; and the more he experiences of God's loving kindness, and the more he grows in grace, the more he sees and feels his own unworthiness. His sins grow behind him, as God's love grows before him; but it is the love that is before, while the guilt is all behind, and the more he sees of the love that forgives, the more, in the expanding and increasing light of that love, he sees of the greatness of the guilt that has been forgiven. So love grows out of sin, and sin seems larger by love, all the way through eternity.

GRACE!—'tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear;
Heaven with the echo shall resound,
And all the earth shall hear.

GRACE first contrived the way
To save rebellious man;
And all the steps that grace display,
Which drew the wondrous plan.

GRACE led my roving feet
To tread the heavenly road;
And new supplies each hour I meet,
While pressing on to God.

GRACE all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days,
It lays in heaven the topmost stone
And well deserves the praise.

CHAPTER VIII.

God's method of discipline.—Faith an element of character for development and growth.—A *reward* of Faith in the *habit* of Faith.

THERE was a Day of Discourse by our Blessed Lord with his disciples on earth, very noticeable for a conversation on the subject of faith, which has singularly, in some points, escaped examination. It was the occasion in Luke's seventeenth chapter, when the apostles came with the simple, childlike prayer, "Lord, increase our faith." The prayer itself is simple and childlike, though it may possibly be offered in words, without the possession of the spirit which it indicates. The prayer itself is at the bottom of the well-spring of our spiritual life.

A man already has *some* faith, who truly feels his *need* of faith, and his dependence on Christ for it. So this prayer offered by the apostles was one of the most satisfactory proofs that faith was in their hearts, and that it was a growing principle, however small at first. We all need to come to Christ with this prayer, but oftentimes we know not what we are praying for, and the apostles themselves hardly knew what they were praying for, when they begged for an increase of their faith. They were in truth praying that our Blessed Lord would take what means he might find necessary to produce a stronger faith in their hearts. They thought they were praying for a direct communication from his Spirit, a direct and positive and immediate exercise of his power in their souls, without any waiting, or working, or difficulty on their

part. But they were very greatly mistaken; and as he saw in them a true sincerity in that request, although mingled with much error, he answered their prayer in his own way and time, not theirs; according to his own wisdom and grace, not their short-sightedness.

They had formed the habit of walking by sight, not faith, and they were carrying that habit even into spiritual things. They wished all their acquisitions to be present ones, and they would have present proof that their prayers were answered. They had no idea upon what a sea of trying discipline their supplications would launch them forth. The true increase of their faith comprised an amount of trial from which they would have shrunk back, could they have foreseen it. And when it came, they saw not then its meaning, they thought it was the wrong way. The increase of faith comprises methods of discipline, both inward and external, which to sight seem very mysterious. At the very time when God is administering the very remedies that are to work in us a greater faith, when Christ, our great Physician, is taking our case in hand, and putting us under the necessary regimen, it may seem to us as if our prayers were neither heard nor answered. Prayer, sometimes, seems to bring nothing but difficulty, seems to do nothing but stir up our ill humors, seems to reveal nothing but our guilt and misery. Then we think God has deserted us, or we have never known the way of his mercy, or have no right to hope in it, and no reason for encouragement. We are almost ready to turn back, perhaps, because of the very discipline by which God would carry us forward. We know not God's methods, and can see but little way before us. Sometimes the direction of those methods seems to sight directly contrary to the way of our progress. But in spiritual things we often have to go down in order to go up, just as in climbing a high mountain you often have to descend in one place in order to ascend in another. So it is in God's discipline. And our habit of judging by sight, and of ask-

ing for sight, or rather of expecting sight in spiritual things, when we have been asking for faith, is very preposterous. So is the habit of being discouraged by present difficulties, inward or external, instead of looking to God, trusting all with Christ, and pressing onwards.

If a traveller were passing through a vast reach of country to gain a destined point, to arrive at some great city, where his business is to be accomplished, what would be thought of his conduct, if, happening upon a barren tract of landscape, a desert, or a rocky ridge of mountains, he should say, I will give up my journey for the present, till the country becomes more favorable; or if he should conclude and say, This cannot be the right road to the city, it is not possible that the path can lead through this desert, or over this mountain; or if he should argue and say, If this *were* the right path, it would certainly lead through a more interesting region, and I should find the landscape more delightful. He would be thought to have taken leave of his senses, if he should stop travelling till the road became more interesting. But the Christian traveller is still more inconsiderate and foolish, who says within himself, every time that the spiritual landscape wears to him an uninteresting aspect, every time that prayer becomes a burden, and the reading of the Bible a leaden duty that has lost its charm, every time that his soul melteth for heaviness, and cleaveth unto the dust, or wandereth in darkness, or in stormy weather, or over craggy mountains: who says within himself, I cannot be in the right way, if I were, it would be more interesting; this cannot be the way to the city; there must be some other way; this cannot be God's way. If a soul should pause and argue in this way, what would become of it? But no! the soul is bound to make progress over rough places as well as smooth ones, and through uninteresting landscapes, and in dark and stormy weather. It is God's way, though these feelings of despondency, or impatience, or discouragement, or unbelief, are not

God's feelings. The way of duty is the way of God's appointment; but the feelings that throw their own coloring over it are the feelings of an imperfect and distrustful or discontented human heart; the Christian Pilgrim is not to give way to them, but to resist them; and for him the discipline of faith is to go forward, notwithstanding those feelings, looking to the end.

"Ye have need of patience that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." The way itself may in reality be a wilderness; and there have been memorable cases, in which, the soul of the pilgrims being much discouraged because of the way, they have turned aside to seek a better way. But the way that for the present seems easier, leads in the end to a place that is infinitely worse than all the evils in the way through the wilderness. The Castle of Despair receives the pilgrims at the end of the wrong way, the way that *seemed* easier; and the evil experience in that Castle is incomparably worse to bear, than all the discouragements which made the soul of the pilgrim to faint within him in the right way. The discouragements themselves afford a discipline to faith. How, indeed, *should* faith be disciplined, if there were not difficulties to be overcome, discouragements to be struggled with? The enjoyment of serene weather, perpetual sunshine, and a flowery path, may be a discipline for *gratitude*, but leaves no opportunity for the trial of *faith*.

Faith itself, the *habit* of faith, gained by doing duty, is one of the *rewards* of faith. To him that hath, and that putteth his money in active use for his Master, shall be given the more; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have. From the discourse of Christ following the prayer of the apostles, it would seem probable that they had been looking for the *rewards* of faith beforehand. It may have been a miraculous faith, which they desired for present exercise, for present power, in Christ's service. But our Blessed Lord

told them that they could not receive so great a gift, except through and after a course of faithful obedience. They must do their *work* of faith for their Lord and Master, and then they should eat and drink. Then this faith should be completed, and in its very completion they should have their reward. But they could not claim it as a debt, and they must not indulge beforehand in any thought that their works of service, or the faith wherewith already they wrought them, were, or could be, works of merit, on the ground of which they could claim acceptance, or step into office in Christ's kingdom. For after they had done all they *could* do, they could not have done anything which they were not bound to do; anything, the neglect of which, or the refusal of which, would not have been a sin. Does a parent lay claim to great merit, because he provides for his children food which is not injurious, or because he takes the proper steps to have his children taught the rudiments of common knowledge, necessary for their existence? Does a servant deem that he lays his master under obligations, because he does not neglect to perform the daily, common duties of his station? Does he claim, when he has spread the table for his master, and waits upon him while he is at meat, to have done a service of great merit, on the ground of which he may claim an extraordinary reward? When he goes upon a common errand, which not to do would be rebellion and disobedience, and unfitness for his place, does he think to have brought his master under obligations for a service of profit to him, of which he can boast, as if it were something above a mere simple, unavoidable duty, something supererogatory? I trow not.

Such was the instruction of our Blessed Lord to his disciples. They were to remember that faith itself was of gradual growth. If they had the seeds of it, the beginnings of it, the true principles of faith, and would go forward in a course of simple obedience for the service, the honor, the glory of their Master, their faith would

grow into great power and glory, and in that very increase would bring both its fruits and its rewards. But they must not seek for it as a selfish thing, or as a grace of power for self-advancement, or mere personal comfort and enjoyment, but as a grace to be used for Christ, and a discipline in his service. Neither must they seek for it under the imagination that by it they could claim heaven on the ground of merit, or a place in the Redeemer's kingdom on the ground of great attainments or great services; for that was not the way in which the soul could be justified. It would be a great mistake to use faith as a kind of justifying works; a mistake into which the apostles themselves were then in danger of falling. Lord, I have so much faith, they would, under the influence of this mistake, have been thinking within themselves; and I claim to be made prime minister, or grand councillor, or first regent, in thy kingdom. Or under the same mistake, and the same mixture of worldly misapprehension, a mother might have come and said, Lord, my sons have so much faith, my two sons; grant that they may sit, the one on thy right hand, the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But no! they knew not what they asked. And in asking for an increase of faith, if they did it at all under such darkness, such misapprehension, and it is very likely they did, they needed great reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. They needed just such an answer as the Saviour made, appealing to their own common sense, in regard to the business of a servant, and the work of faith as a service.

They had not yet learned that the grace of faith was a gradual discipline, not a mere sudden, supernatural, or miraculous endowment. It was the gift of God, but a gift in his own way, not theirs. So is the kingdom of God, and so is faith, which individually in men is the essence of that kingdom, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the

earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. And again, the kingdom of heaven, and faith, the essence of that kingdom, is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which, indeed, is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Now then, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, if ye have the true germ of this grace, this growing germ, and will go forward in its development, by a course of persevering, self-forgetting obedience to God, obedience to your Divine Master for his glory, out of love to him, and not regard to yourselves, this seed and principle of faith shall spring and grow, ye know not how; and it shall become a great tree, that no tempest can uproot or shake.

Ye come to me, my disciples, as for a supernatural, miraculous endowment; but I tell you that faith is a discipline of your souls; it is a life, not a miracle; and it springs up, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. Ye come to me for a miracle; I tell you it depends also upon yourselves; upon your own humility, and persevering, simple-hearted, single-hearted obedience; it depends upon your own life for your Lord and Master. I cannot give you this faith before you have learned this discipline, and formed this habit of humble service, in dependence upon me. It would be like giving a servant his reward, before he has performed the duties of his station. It would be like a master telling his servant to take his place at the table, and to eat and drink, before the master himself has been served, or his wishes and commands attended to. Your faith will grow by the patient exercise of that which ye already have. To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly. But it is a habit, a life, a discipline of the soul, and cannot be a mere miraculous endowment. If ye cultivate its beginnings, and thus by grace make the germ and the gift of

grace pass into a life, a habit, then ye shall be able to do anything, and nothing shall be too hard for you. But a *life* of faith is necessary for the *growth* of faith, and ye will meet with trials of your faith, which nothing but the *habit* of your faith will be able to carry you through; and ye shall have works of faith to do, evil spirits to overcome, in which I shall have to tell you, This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. Pray, fast, watch, labor, strive, discipline yourselves as God leads you on, and co-operate with him, while he is working in and upon you, and ye shall have a lasting faith, and a habit of faith that can remove mountains.

Now this truth of gradualism in the growth, nourishment, and discipline of faith, and this dependence of the power and life of faith upon practical obedience, is so important, that there is scarcely anything in the whole compass of theology more essential for the soul to study and be thoroughly acquainted with. God's manner of discipline with us must be known in some degree, that we may not ignorantly go against it, or mistake, or thwart it, or perplex ourselves unnecessarily on account of it, or deprive our souls of the good they might enjoy in and from it. God's discipline with us is education, the education of our souls for eternity. It is at first a discipline to prepare us for his service, to form, draw forth, and invigorate our spiritual faculties, to be exercised for his glory, in the spread of his kingdom, in the work of doing good, in a world of sin and sorrow, pain and conflict. It is also a discipline in itself, through this consequent and attendant habit of service, obedience, and self-denying love, for the blissful enjoyment of God himself in heaven, and for an infinitely higher and more extended service of faith, and position of glorious usefulness, in that eternal kingdom. God acts with us as free agents, whose elements of character are all voluntary, whose good must be voluntary, or it is not good. Faith, in all its varieties, must be the act and exercise of our own souls, as well as the gift of God. It must be, under God's working, the

co-operation of our own spirits with his Spirit, working in us both to will and to do.

It is by work here that God prepares us for rest hereafter. It is by faith here, amidst difficulties, that God prepares us for sight hereafter, amidst light and glory ineffable, inconceivable. The more work here, the deeper and more blissful rest hereafter. The more faith here, amidst discouragements and darkness, the vaster, clearer, more transporting sight hereafter. The subduing of the will here to God's will, the habit of self-denial formed under the teachings and the power of faith, the habit of working for God amidst doubts and difficulties, will be followed by a state where no self-denial is needed, because the will is completely one with God's will, because the soul is entirely absorbed in God and his blissful service and glory, without any mixture of sin, any thought of self, any experience of evil. Heaven itself is this perfect delight in the will and service of God. Heaven is a state, not a place, or it is a place, because it is a state first; a place and state of glory and rest hereafer, because there was a place and state of difficulty and grace here. Now God works in his children the preparation, the fitness, for Heaven as an eternal, immutable place and state of glory and blessedness hereafter, by passing them through a medium of refining fire here; by *leading* them through a state and place of difficulty, conflict, self-denial, service, where service is costly; leading them by grace in exercise, grace in conflict, grace fervently sought and labored after, to the state and place, where grace is sole and supreme in an eternal likeness and oneness with God.

This was Christ's work with his disciples on earth. It is still his work, now that he reigns in heaven. While he was himself on earth, the object of sight rather than faith, their faith was stationary in its progress; it was germinating and preparing for growth, but their sight itself prevented faith. Christ was preparing them by his discipline and instructions, and then, so soon as he himself was taken

up out of their sight, their faith grew like a mighty tree that could brave the most terrible tempests. When every sensible stay was taken away from them, when all the pillars of hope had been broken, on which they had confidently leaned while Christ was with them, looking even to the last moment of life for a temporal deliverance, kingdom, and reign; when every expectation of that nature, and every earthly imagination, had vanished with the sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, then faith took firm hold upon the promises; then faith communed with, and relied upon, an unseen spiritual Almighty Saviour; then faith grew with the greater rapidity for its long previous discipline in Christ's own presence. Christ's departing words had a great meaning for his disciples, which they were not then aware of. "It is expedient for you that I go away from you; if I depart not, the Comforter will not come to you." If Christ had not departed, the work of the Comforter, the work of faith, could not have been completed. It is often necessary that sensible supports and stays be removed, before the soul will rest upon those which are unseen, eternal, and spiritual.

> One sun by day, by night ten thousand shine,
> And light us deep into the Deity!

Yea, when the day that lighted us to our earthly business, our cares of sight and sense, and also kept the outward sensitive organization of our nature so wakeful and active, and so fully occupied, that there was hardly a moment for thought, has passed into the silence and darkness of midnight, then not only the starry heavens reveal the infinite extent of God's universe, but faith is quickened, and in solemn, holy meditation and prayer, rises to heaven. So it is with God's gracious discipline. When the shades of darkness fall, when the winds rise, and deep calleth unto deep at the noise of God's water-spouts, then there is nothing but God left for the soul by faith to rest upon.

CHAPTER IX.

The germ and the blade under discipline for the harvest.—Contrast and variety of spiritual experiences.

Among the parables of our Blessed Lord, there are none more beautiful and full of sacred meaning, than those whose imagery is taken from the processes of seed time and harvest. He gives us a system of accountability and retribution sometimes in a single sentence, and in like manner sketches the process and progress of his own grace. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." This illustration we doubt not was meant to be applied both to individual experience, and to the workings of God's Providence and grace on a scale as wide as the world. We have here a picture of the growth of the kingdom of God, both in an individual soul, and in the nations. But perhaps the more direct application of the figure is to the workings of God's regenerating Word and Spirit in the individual heart.

Our Blessed Lord says that this working is like seed cast into the ground, which the earth brings forth of itself into fruit. There is here, as elsewhere, a picture of God working, and man co-operating with God. It is not God

alone, nor man alone, but God in man; as it is not the seed alone nor the earth alone, but the seed in the earth, and the earth by fructifying powers and tendencies given to it of God, and active according to God's arrangement. Although faith is *as* a seed, or a germ, implanted in a prepared soil, and growing gradually, as such a plant grows, yet the substance and the resemblance must not be confounded; for faith in man's heart is not itself a physical germ, or growing plant, set in the soul from abroad, but it is a voluntary life of the soul, a habit of the spiritual existence, by and under the grace of God. God's discipline is at work to draw out the soul into such habit, such life. When such life and habit are formed, and just *so far* as they are formed, the object of God's discipline, personally, is accomplished, or at least is going forward to its accomplishment. This is our education at the hand of God. It is not the communication of immediate or miraculous power or knowledge, at which God, by his providence and grace, is aiming, but it is the quickening and training of our souls to the possession and exercise of the divine life. And as a child begins to learn to walk by creeping, and to read by spelling; or as a tree begins to grow by the blade first, or an ear of wheat by the blade, and then the ear, and afterwards the full corn in the ear; so with our learning of the life of faith, our growing up into the full and perfect habit of that life.

The end, object, and fulfilment of that life are future, and God is educating us not for immediate effects merely, but for eternity. All our discipline is for lasting purposes, not transitory results, and God will form us to *habits* of life, not mere temporary excitements. God will work in us *elements* of character, not mere fitful impulses. *We* look too much to *present* frames, enjoyments, fruits; God looks to eternal results, and an eternal life of holiness and glory. We look to that which is transitory; God looks to that which is permanent. We look to feelings, emotions, speculations; God looks to active habits, and a life made

up of principles and habits, which shall be the eternal inalienable nature of our being.

Even for this world alone, this is the only true conception of education. To educate a child is not merely to store the soul with knowledge, but to draw forth and strengthen the sensibilities and faculties of mind and heart. While the understanding is yet tender, its powers in their greenness and infancy, but little knowledge, and that very gradually, can be received; but the faculties themselves must be developed and exercised; and a true education is the preparation of the mind, by such wise and well directed discipline, by the formation of good habits, through judicious instruction and example, for the proper acting of its part in the world; for those occasions, where not mere knowledge, but a well prepared, disciplined, and balanced judgment will be requisite, with strong habits of thought, of decision, of comparison, of selection, and just, manly, virtuous, religious principles of action. This is education; not the crowding of the mind with rules and knowledges, but the forming of the mind, from correct principles, to upright habits and energetic appliances. The mind is not a warehouse, in which goods are to be stored for sale, but a manufactory, in which great care is to be lavished first upon the selection of the material to be wrought, and next upon the machinery, the right husbanding and direction of the power, and the combination of all the agencies for the greatest activity and productiveness.

And thus it is that God deals with us, in disciplining us by faith. He will have *habits* of faith. He will have not merely passive emotions, but active habits, and a life. He will have not transitory forms of feeling merely, but a fountain inexhaustible, a fire for ever burning, a principle, a power, a nature. He will draw out our native powers into a voluntary, spontaneous co-operation with his supernatural grace and providential discipline. Thus it is that he will make faith to increase by exercise. In order to produce that exercise, to draw forth the soul into it, he

seems, sometimes, to quit the soul, to go away from it, and leave it to itself, in darkness. He deals with it, sometimes, as a mother deals with a little child in teaching it to walk. Who has not watched the careful fond mother setting down her little child in one part of the room alone, then gradually retreating from it, leaving it standing by itself, half terrified, and then beckoning to it, and calling it to take courage and come? Who has not seen the little trembling creature burst into tears, because it seemed to be so deserted, and then at length, gaining courage from necessity, with little tottering steps, advance towards the outstretched arms of its mother, and at last, having performed the grand feat of a walk quite across the floor, hide itself rejoiced and comforted in her bosom? Thus God teaches us to walk by faith. Thus God teaches us to exercise our spritual faculties; thus he draws forth our powers, our affections, into a co-operation with his own purposes, providences, and grace; into the formation of habits, that shall grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength, into life everlasting.

Sometimes his providences are dark, and he seems to have deserted the soul, when he is only going before it, and calling it to come after him. The Lord Jesus loves to behold even the feeblest exercise of faith, and will neither break the bruised seed nor quench the smoking flax. Sometimes he may seem to deny our requests, even with severity, or to pay no attention to them, when in reality he is taking the very way to answer them, and will answer them in that very way which will make the response the greater blessing. Thus was it with the Syrophenician woman. Her heart was drawn out, by the Saviour's seeming neglect, into such a fervor of prayer and power of faith, that the effect of that exercise alone upon her soul would have been a blessing beyond all price; and the production of that state of mind, before the mercy which she sought was granted, made that healing mercy itself a thousand times more precious. So it is in the case of

every parent, who is anxiously seeking the conversion of a dear child. God may seem to defer his grace, may let that child long wander on in paths of sin and folly, till at length the soul of the parent shall have been brought to such an exercise of faith, that when the conversion of the child takes place, both the sad anxiety and the blessing, both the apparent denial or neglect, and the manifest answer of prayer, shall combine to work a *habit* of faith, such as no other discipline of the soul could possibly produce.

Our expectations are not to be made the rule of God's benefactions. Our opinions, suppositions, imaginations as to what is best, are often widely different from God's judgment, in the case before us, as to what is fit. And the reason often is that God and we are working for such different results; God for an eternal character and an eternal good, we, for a relief from present distress, or the accomplishment of a present purpose. God's ways in the discipline of his grace are not at all as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts; if they were, very few of us would ever reach heaven. Our ideas of what is fit are those of poor blind creatures of a day, crushed before the moth. And constantly our Lord must answer us as he did Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

We often act the part of Passion even in regard to the things of grace, and would have all our good things now; and probably if God should give them to us, without the gradual active habits necessary to prepare us for the use of them, we should spend them all at once, like Passion. We should be Prodigal Sons, even in the things of the kingdom of heaven, and should soon find ourselves reduced to the condition of eating husks. It would be as it is with ill-educated children, on whom their parents bestow a large patrimony, but who, not knowing how to take care of it, speedily run it through, and come back, in poverty, for more; while a well-educated son, trained to good

habits, with principles rightly formed and developed, though endowed with no patrimony *but* this good education, will accumulate an estate almost as fast as the Prodigal son will waste one; and having thus virtuously accumulated it, will benevolently use it. We would often receive all, and have all, without the labor of getting all; but God would have us acquire grace by self-denying diligence; and therefore our receipts of grace often come in very sparingly, and are long in coming; not because of God's parsimony, but our indolence; not because of God's unwillingness to give, but our impatience in asking, and unfitness to receive. God will not himself do, what the prophet, with such rude vigor and point, tells us *not* to do, put our wages into a bag with holes. It is not only many things that Christ has to *say* to his disciples, which they cannot *bear* now, but many things to *give* them, which they cannot *receive* now, and which, if they *were* received, would be wasted, just as if the things were *said*, they would not be understood, or else misapplied. There may be the wresting and misapplication of gifts, as well as of words, by those who are unlearned and unstable.

It is said of Ezra, that he came to Jerusalem with the good hand of his God upon him, *because he had prepared his heart* to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it. A preparation of heart by the *discipline* of faith is necessary for the reception of great *gifts* of faith; and the discipline itself is found to be the ordinary channel through which the gifts are conveyed. God would not have us play the part of Passion, even in the divine life, but of Patience; and so he will teach us to admire and love his own discipline. We often think we desire more grace, when God sees that we have formed no habit of striving after it, and are not prepared to use it, even if it were received.

"The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." Most true is this proverb in spiritual things. If the soul of the sluggard should be filled according to his desires, the fulness

would not remain with him; it would be soon gone. There is no principle of life, no habit of faith, in such a case, no element of a divine nature, to turn what it receives into an everlasting part and possession of itself. Neither is there any disposition, in such a case, to go from strength to strength, from one degree of grace and glory to another; but a sluggish inactive contentment, like that of a lazy, inefficient man, who would rather live idly by begging, than help himself.

While, therefore, God would not have in his children a kind of passion that excludes patience, he would still have an unsatisfied restlessness in the soul that comes to him for grace, and a perpetual desire to make each degree of grace only the stepping stone to a still higher degree. "My soul followeth hard after thee." When there is this habit of progress, everything given is so much gained. And the proverb is especially true in the things of grace, that God helps those who help themselves. "My soul followeth hard after thee; *thy right hand upholdeth me.*" Those who give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, are endowed of God with such plenteous grace, and such *habits* of grace are formed under his guidance, that they can hardly doubt in regard to their filial relationship to God. But those who wait for the feeling of assurance to come upon them like a gale of wind, or a prize in a lottery, or a sovereign fiat of the Almighty, will wait in vain; and while thus waiting and longing, will grow leaner and leaner in the Christian life. Indeed, there is all the difference between those who would have the Spirit of heaven baptize and possess them without their own self-denying efforts, and those who are accustomed to the Christian conflict, that there is between those who would become suddenly rich by speculating, or by the drawing of a prize, and those who are willing to gain a competency by patient industry.

Patience keeps all the gains of grace, and wastes nothing. Passion and speculation lose, as often as they

gain. Hence, your passionate, fitful Christians are at extremes; sometimes on the heights of feeling and of glory, sometimes in the depths of woe. But your conscientious, patient, diligent Christians, are pressing onward in a steady progression, that, though it has its depths and heights, and sometimes at great distances between, is nevertheless as the path of the just, as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. Progression, not startling inequality, is the satisfactory proof of Christian experience. The blade, the ear, the full corn in the ear. There is a great difference between the blade and the ear; the difference would be a startling inequality, if one morning the ear should be visible ripening towards the full, and the next morning it should be found, over night, to have retreated back into the blade. But such is not Christian experience. Inequalities may be great at different intervals, and if a Christian be a growing Christian, they *will* be great; but great by gradual growth, not by sudden and startling change, either of increase or decrease. They will be great by growth from less grace to greater, great by comparison of the blade with the ear, but not by sudden changes, or mere frames of feeling; great by growth from glory to glory; we all, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Now we think this is the scriptural exhibition. But is it always thus to sight and present experience, or is this simply a statement of what takes place in reality, through fluctuations of feeling and changes of present experience, that seem, at times, the elements of a very different agency, the march of an absolutely contrasted and opposite progression? Undoubtedly this progress from glory to glory is often a thing unknown in present experience, though actually going on by the grace of God. There may be present experience that looks like despair, which shall be but the necessary step to the next degree of glory; there may be great extremes by God's discipline,

which are not fitful extremes by human passion. David passed through such extremes, now in the heights, now in the depths, now apparently almost in heaven, now in hell. Sometimes his soul sits and sings, like a bird lighting from the clear air upon the topmost leafy bough of a tree, fresh with the dew of the morning; sometimes he seems not only to desire, but really to possess, wings like a dove to fly away and be at rest. Then again he chatters like a crane or a swallow; he is like an owl of the desert, like a pelican of the wilderness. Sometimes his heart rejoices in God like a water-brook, again it is like a dry, crinkling, leathern bottle in the smoke. Sometimes his soul cleaveth unto the dust, and then again starts forward like an arrow, and rises like an eagle. Sometimes his bones are burned as an hearth, and his heart is smitten and withered like grass; and then again he rises to heaven like a bright flame, or his soul is as Mount Zion that cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.

Compare the 88th Psalm with the 118th or the 104th, and see if you could possibly recognise them as records of the same soul's experience. In one view you will say no; in another, yes, because the tenor of the one Psalm in the depths, just implies and prepares the way for the other on the heights; and those changes are inevitable to deep feeling, changes from despondency to exultation, from despair to triumph, from darkness to light. The same deep and strong feeling in view of one's own guilt, shut up to that, will be like an envelopment in the fire and smoke of the bottomless pit; when in view of God's glorious attributes and of Christ's preciousness, loveliness, and mercy, it will be like an embathing in the flood of melody and light from the open gates of heaven. But these inequalities and extremes may take place under the same degree of grace and strength and glory in the soul. These changes may be changes of God's discipline for the *promotion* of his grace. They may be like the changes of rain and storm and dry weather and sunshine upon the

same green blade, which under all is steadily ripening into the ear, but which, if it were a sensitive intelligence, like man's soul, might suppose that all these changes were within itself, parts of its own life, instead of the discipline of God for the *growth* of that life. They may also be changes, that depend more upon natural temperament than grace; changes of God's discipline to bring nature *under* grace. Many of the changes in a character like Dr. Payson's we shall find to be changes of natural temperament under the *discipline* of grace, or of divine providence for the *production* of grace; while again the changes in a character like President Edwards', are more directly, immediately, and serenely, changes of and by grace.

Variety in natural temperament calls for variety in God's discipline, and makes variety in the development and appearance of grace. Some souls are so like crystal, or clear glass, that the light of heaven, the light of grace, seems to shine through them in its own serene purity unchanged. Others are like a prism, or window of stained glass, where the light comes through particular fancies and tendencies of character, and with colors more human than divine. And yet, the last display may seem the most splendid and imposing, the work of the greatest labor, disclosing more of the divine glory; whereas, the first gives the most direct, simple, unerring view of God and his grace. You see through the first more of the very light of heaven, through the last a mixture of human temperaments and sympathies. Change in the last may be more manifest than in the first, and growth in grace may be more perceptible, just because there was more of the merely human that needed to be removed; and as that is taken away, and the divine supplies its place, the change is more noticeable. The change from sin to holiness may be regarded as more wonderful than the change from glory to glory; but it is not more beautiful. *Grace* changes by ***degrees***, and degrees ***only***, from good to better, from less

to greater. *Nature*, under the *discipline* of grace, changes in *quality*, from bad to good, from sin to holiness, from self to God.

On this subject, the remarks of President Edwards in his work on Revivals of Religion, as well as in the book of Religious Affections, are exceedingly instructive and valuable. His section on the experiences of Christians is full of profound wisdom; the passages on defective experiences, on the degenerating of experiences, and also on *the mixture of evil in the best experiences*, should be read with care and self-examination. They strike at the root of all imaginary perfection, and put the soul on its guard against giving advantage to the devil through ignorance of his devices.

The testimony of a man like Edwards on the question of spiritual perfection in this world, is of so much the greater importance, because it was not given in argument on a point, not proposed for the establishing of an opinion, not controversial in any way, but rather incidental, in the simple outpouring of the treasures of experience, observation, and the knowledge of the Word of God. "Indeed," says Edwards, "*it is not to be supposed that Christians ever have any experiences in this world, that are wholly pure, entirely spiritual, without any mixture of what is natural and carnal.* The beam of light, as it comes from the *fountain of light* upon our hearts, is pure, but as it is reflected thence it is mixed; the seed as sent from heaven and planted in the heart, is pure, but as it springs up out of the heart, is impure; yea, there is commonly a much greater mixture than persons for the most part seem to have any imagination of. I have often thought that the experiences of true Christians are very frequently, as it is with some kinds of fruits, that are enveloped with several coverings of thick shells or pods, which are thrown away by him that gathers the fruit, and but a very small part of the whole bulk is the pure kernel, that is good to eat."

This is an admirable illustration, the more so, because

it is so humbling to the pride of our nature; it is as true as it is beautiful. The change in this world, we have reason to believe, is *always* imperfect, never complete; and yet, even in its most imperfect commencement, how glorious, how blessed! How blessed to be thus beneath the forming hand of God our Saviour! How happy is a Christian, whom God is leading onward and upward to glory, under all this experience! We care not what at present may be the phase of this experience. The Christian may seem to be brought by it to the very gates of hell; yet even there, or groping his way with sighs and groans unutterable in the valley of the shadow of death, he is infinitely happier than the most joyous and favored of the children of this world. For God is with him, preparing him for himself, and perhaps passing his soul through some faint experience of hell beforehand, that he may be purged from sin and saved from hell for ever. Yea, he may be passing through the fire now, that the fire may never have power to touch him hereafter. But the prosperous child of this world is drawn of Satan through a career of pleasure here, that he may be kept from God and plunged in fire hereafter.

To return once more to the beautiful figure under which our Blessed Lord has illustrated the work of his grace; it is manifest from its nature that it has, at a definite period, for which no other period can be exchanged, its beginning, its progress, and its end. It is just as peculiar and appropriate, and we may add essential, as the seedtime to the husbandman, and the summer to the growth of nature, and the autumn to the reaper. If the seedtime be deferred to the autumn, will the harvest ripen in the winter? If the careless husbandman refuse to sow in the spring, or the thorny earth refuse its ministrations in the summer, and produce but nettles, what is there for it in the autumn but to be burned? Whose end, says the apostle, comparing it to the fruitless soul, is to be burned.

There are days of grace in the summer season of our

souls, presenting influences and opportunities of heaven, like the glorious autumn Sabbath with its crystal atmosphere, its heavenly repose, its serene and sacred light; days given of God in mercy to the soul for its growth in God's own likeness. There is a season of such visitation for every soul, but certainly it is not often repeated, it may never return, and therefore, if neglected, is neglected for ever. And if the work of grâce be not begun in life, it will neither be begun nor completed in eternity. Habit, the habit of grace as well as sense, is a thing of time. The formation of character *takes* time; a character for heaven as well as hell. If the heavenly work be begun in season, it is well. But if not, then you are taking *all* the time of your probation for evil; and if the period for the growth of good be passed, you are lost; it is the destruction of the soul for ever. Then cometh the end. The angels are the reapers. Let both grow, tares and wheat, together until the harvest.

CHAPTER X.

Individuality and independence.—God in man, not man reduplicated.—Entire dependence God-ward, entire independence and originality, man-ward.—Helps from Christian biographies.—Supremacy and power of Christ's example.

FAITH in Christ is in every man who possesses it the most purely original and independent part of his character. Indeed, reliance upon Christ is a man's *only* originality and independence; everything else, in the whole empire of sin and the experience of fallen beings, he learns from his fellow-men and imitates. His faith is his own, taught and produced in him only by the Holy Spirit. Work out your own salvation,—for it is God that worketh in you. There is great emphasis in this text upon that word *own*.

Work out your *own* salvation, each for himself, in reliance only on God, not upon man, not upon one another. Individual dependence upon God in Christ is the great lesson of the gospel; an independence of man and a dependence on God as entire and perfect, as if each individual were the only being to be saved in the world, the only one under Christian duties and responsibilities. Every soul is to work out its *own* salvation, in a dependence on God as independent of man, as if there were no other soul in the same conflict, or that had ever passed through it. The instrumentalities of men upon one another are simply God's agencies to accomplish this individual work. All the complications and responsibilities of society, and of social duties, are just a series of the

demands, the causes, and occasions of individual effort. The world is a great school, a spiritual gymnasium for the soul. All things are meant to bring men to God. Jacob's ladder is not merely let down from heaven; life itself and all things in it are such a ladder if there be a dreaming soul, and a disposition to see and use all things in the light of heaven. Men, events, blessings, trials, relationships, necessities, dependencies, charities, duties, cares, and businesses, may be steps in the ladder, with angels ascending and descending.

The gospel distribution of responsibility throws at the same time all upon one, and one upon all. It does this in a way that is almost contradictory. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden. If every man is to bear his own burden, it might be asked, how can each bear the other's? And again, if ye bear one another's burdens, how can each have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another? The truth is, here is the very perfection of society, set down in these brief items; the perfection at once of dependence and independence, of personal and mutual responsibility and accountability. In this kingdom of heaven upon earth, formed by each one having as much at heart the welfare of others as his own, each individual is to regard all others as so many reduplicates of self, to be blest and benefited, and every individual is to avoid throwing his own burdens upon others. Each is to prove his own work, and not leave it to be accomplished by others, and at the same time each is to help all others as often as he can find opportunity. And the opportunity to bless others is to be regarded as itself one of the greatest of blessings. This, I say, is the society of heaven; this is perfect love, casting out fear; this would put a stop to human misery, and make angels out of men.

Now in this state of things, the more earnestly a man endeavors to prove his own work, and to have rejoicing in himself alone and not in another, the more he will have rejoicing in others' holiness as the fruit of his own. The more a man relies solely upon God, the more he will have others relying on himself, or thrown upon himself to be blest by him. It is one of the rewards of such independence of man in reliance upon God, one of the rewards of eminent piety in proving its own work, to be constituted a great instrumentality of God in winning other souls to piety and heaven. The more entirely and thoroughly a man, in humble dependence upon God, does his own work, the more he will help others to do their work, and the more of others' work God will enable him to do, and give him opportunity to do, for God. This, I say, is a great reward of original, laborious, deep piety, You may see it in the case of such men as Baxter and Bunyan, Halyburton, Edwards, and Payson. Never leaving other men to bear *their* burdens, but always going to God alone with them, and looking to God's discipline and Christ's example, not man's, God has given them, in consequence, the inestimable privilege of bearing the burdens and blessing the souls of very many others, so fulfilling the law of Christ. And though they have now rested from their labors, as we call labor, yet still in their works they are the burden-bearers of the Christian world; in their works they are still going about doing good, and in some measure, like Christ himself, bearing men's infirmities, and healing their sicknesses. In this sense, though they rest from their labors, their works still follow them.

But piety cannot be gained by proxy; and although God makes use of these secondary instrumentalities to bring men to himself, it is a great evil, when men rely upon the instrumentalities instead of God, and imitate Christ's agencies instead of Christ. A secondary and second rate piety is the consequence, instead of original and deep experience. Men cease to prove their own work,

and to have rejoicing in themselves alone. Their piety becomes a superficial imitation, not of the Author and Finisher of our Faith, but of poor creatures like themselves. It is the copy of a copy, and perhaps the very imperfections are imitated. Men use the language and adopt the phrases taught by the piety of others, without the fire of that piety to give life and meaning to the language. The expressions of religious experience are the work of foreign or external and artificial training, and not fresh from the heart. Imitative diaries become common, with the same complaints, the same confessions, the same mournings, the same forms of prayer. Religious experience becomes a monotonous stereotype, a fashion, a prevailing manner, not a living spirit and a new creation.

But the Christian conflict cannot be imitated. The soul must not merely speculate about it, nor gaze upon others' record of it, but engage in it, each soul for itself. So run I, not as uncertainly, said the apostle; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air. The closest watching of the Christian pilgrimage, the most accurate acquaintance with its theory, will be of no avail without this. One soul cannot be inspired by the fire of another's piety, nor possess its elements, except by an original personal application to the Word and Spirit of God. The world may cry, Give us of your oil; but the answer ever must be, Go ye and buy for yourselves. We are to look to the Author and Finisher. Faith must be faith in Christ, not in Richard Baxter.

Nothing can be an element of life and power in the Christian but what is thus original. There may be great speculative knowledge without this, but it will be inert and cold. Only that which comes burning from the heart will reach the heart. The fire of God's Word must be a fire of experience, a fire of faith, in the Christian's own soul, as a flame in one's bones, before it can be like the fire and the hammer upon other souls. What a man has gained for himself, with great care and labor, he will value

and keep; he will know how to use it, and increase it, whether it be knowledge or wealth. In Christian experience, a little that is one's own is better than whole volumes at second-hand. The knowledge of his own poverty that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. Indeed, the experience, the sense, of our vanity and misery out of Christ is itself great riches. Everything is great riches, which a man receives direct from the Saviour; and all true Christian experience comes direct from him. Hence, while the charge is, Work out your *own*, the effect of so working is to make the soul feel that it is all of Christ, that all which we can justly call our own is mere guilt and wretchedness. The more a man receives from Christ, the poorer he feels, and the richer, at one and the same time; the poorer in himself, the richer in his Saviour. The heaven-taught knowledge of this poverty is itself great power and riches, while the imagination of great self-riches is the most disastrous weakness and poverty.

If a man works his own, without entire dependence on Christ, and the experience of God working in him, he works a mine of death. If he accumulates what he regards as his own righteousness, to make sure of heaven, and does not, in utter abrogation of self, throw himself on Christ, he works not his own salvation, but his own ruin. The story is told in Oriental fable of a man who gathered great stores of grain in his warehouse against a time of famine, and waited till the price should rise. He saw the misery of the poor, but still kept his warehouse shut till the grain should bring the price his greediness demanded for it. At length the price got to that height, and then he took the key and went to unlock his gates, exulting in the thought of the enormous wealth of which he was coming in possession; when lo! a worm had penetrated the warehouse, and his grain was a vast heap of rottenness. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God. So is he that accumulates and endeavors to live

upon his own or others' experience, but not in Christ. That which is not of faith, not received in daily reliance upon God, in daily renewed experience in Christ, breeds worms, like the manna hoarded by the Israelites in unbelief, which stank and could not be eaten. So a self-righteous or borrowed experience rots on one's hands.

And yet, the experience of others is of inestimable value, properly used. All things are to be tried by God's Word, and the soul must gain its own growth in Christ by feeding upon that Word. But the experience of others may be a great encouragement and help. Such a help Bunyan once found in reading Luther on Galatians; it seemed to him as if the book were written out of his own heart. It was written out of Luther's heart, or rather out of the Word in Luther's heart, and described the same conflicts through which Bunyan in his loneliness had been toiling and battling, not knowing that any other creature in the world had ever passed through the same. So, when Bunyan found his own experience drawn out in such vivid coloring and language in Luther's account of the saint's experience according to God's Word, it was a surprising comfort to him. But it was not a thing to begin with, or to copy from, but to meet with by the way, and compare notes, turning all the while to God's Word. And this is just the use which should be made of religious biographies. It is not from them that we are to learn the language or derive the modes of true religious experience, but from God's Word. There may be things in them to aid us, to animate us, to warn, to reprove, and humble us, but they cannot be our guides, our models. There is but one model, and that is at once our Law and our Lord. All others are to be regarded only as they resemble that. Be ye followers of me, said Paul, just so far as I also am of Christ. Bright human examples are good, so far as they reflect the glory of the Saviour, and turn the soul to him. But as in learning to draw, a pupil of any ingenuity will not take the paper and lay it over the sketch before it and

so trace it, but with the sketch in view will reproduce one like it, but not the same, using these copies simply for advancement; so we are to use religious biographies. They are simply helps to bring us to God, ministering impulses, warnings, encouragements. As Christian in travelling through the Valley of the shadow of death thought he heard a voice before him singing, and it made him rejoice even in darkness; for thought he within himself, nobody could sing in this place except God was with him, and if God be with the pilgrim before me, whoever he may be, why not with me also, although my soul be cast down within me by these hideous sights and sounds in the darkness; so the reading of the progress of other Christians may rejoice the soul of the pilgrim, and be the means of animating his faith. The sight of God's grace in others it was always intended should quicken his grace in ourselves. There is a great and mighty use to be made of Christ's example, and only of that. There is a necessity for that in our own nature, a necessity of support for ourselves, and of protection from others.

We are all creatures of imitation: it is a propensity which seems absolutely essential to the existence of human society. Most of us, however, possess unfortunately so great a degree of it, that it overpowers all originality of character, and leaves us at the mercy of all the influences which may be darted upon us from every passing acquaintance, and not unfrequently the sport of every casualty that can happen. It subjects the character to be, we cannot say formed, but altered and re-altered, modelled and re-modelled, actuated sometimes for the worse, sometimes for the better, by every human mind with which it comes in contact. It leaves it to be tossed about like a piece of coin, till by constant, successive attrition every vestige of any original impression is worn away, and all individuality is effaced. Instead of taking the formation of our character into our own hands, and looking with a watchful and suspicious eye to all the influences which

may come to us from the friends and acquaintances with whom we associate, we leave it as it were an empty sheet, like the blank space of a subscription paper, on which every man is at liberty to write his name, and leave the impression of his seal, till it is filled up, an unintelligible blot, the chaotic scrawl of ten thousand confused and contrasted signatures. It is mournful to think how many immortal spirits we influence, and by how many we are influenced in the course of our lives, and yet how little caution we use as to the moral and mental impressions which we give and receive. The pursuits of human life, and the characters we come in contact with, are so varied, the objects that are ever demanding our attention so manifold, that we are constantly forgetting the great purpose of life, and yielding ourselves to the influence of adventitious circumstances.

Hence the absolute necessity of one commanding model, and but one, in all the universe. We must hang up the portrait before us; we must study its features; we must try to catch its spirit, and to assimilate, by God's grace, by constant exertion, our own character to its glories. By it we must correct our wanderings, measure our improvements, ascertain what manner of spirit we are of. Unless this be the case, instead of imitating one, we shall unconsciously imitate a thousand, receiving impressions from all the casual acquaintances and occurrences of life, as various as the countenances of our race, as multiplied and heterogeneous as the rays that fall from a broken prism; and from these mingled, momentary, and multiplied influences our moral and active habits for time and eternity will be made up. Christ and Christ only must be our pattern. Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, we may detect and throw off every besetting evil, and with him always before us, we shall be in no danger from influences that would otherwise drive us about like a plank in the ocean. Imitate him, and we are perfectly safe; but without him, all is uncertain, unsafe,

unstable. The holiest men who have gone before us, and the holiest now upon the scene of conflict, are all imperfect, erring, sinful. Were it allowable, it would not be safe or prudent to take even the best of them as our exclusive guides in the formation of our Christian character. We are liable to a mistaken judgment in regard to many points in their temper and deportment; in the glow of admiration their very faults may be copied as virtues.

Moreover, the peculiar characteristics of Christ's most eminent followers may not be capable of universal application. Their piety, like that of all other men, was much moulded by circumstances, and by the original bias of their moral and mental constitution. If we could succeed in grafting it upon our own lives, still it would be a forced growth, destitute of the freedom and vigor of a native plant. All that is good in them we are indeed bound to exhibit, and by it we must be animated; but the religion of the best of men has foreign ingredients to weaken its efficacy, if not to adulterate its purity. What was unnecessary gloom, arising from peculiarities of temperament, in Brainard, never can become piety in us. What was psychical despondency in the beloved Martyr cannot change its nature, though some of us may imitate it as an excellence; what was nervous depression or excitement in Payson can never in us become a virtue, or minister to the depth, truth, and life of our religious exercises. Nor is it possible to imitate the excellences of these saints, by making them our model, and neglecting Christ. As in order to cultivate the style of a distinguished author, if a student wished to do that, he must make himself acquainted with the same discipline by which the author's powers were developed; must study the same books and be familiar with the same minds, which nourished his genius; just so, if we wish to possess and exhibit the qualities of any eminent Christian, whose character we greatly admire, we must hourly and unceasingly be intimate with the same Saviour, who was his example and

his support. Otherwise, the exhibition which we make of those graces will be but a mangled and miserable copy of what at first was only a faint imitation of Him who knew no sin; in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, but who yet was made like unto his brethren, and exhibited humanity in its noblest and most perfect form. No mere reflection of his brightness should be suffered to intercept our steadfast gaze at the great fountain of all light and life. It is as if we should darken our windows and light up a taper, when all creation is glowing in the brilliance of the noonday sun.

Now this is God's wisdom and mercy for us. The scheme of the gospel is God in man, not man reduplicated; it is man formed on God, in every case of regeneration, not on man; after God, not after man. God-ward, true religion in man is entire dependence; man-ward, it is entire independence and originality. Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new, and all things are of God: God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, God in Christ purifying us unto himself, new creating us by his Spirit, God in Christ as our example, bringing us into the possession and reflection of his own image.

By various maxims, forms, and rules,
That pass for wisdom in the schools,
I strove my passions to restrain,
But all my efforts proved in vain.
But since the Saviour I have known,
My rules are all reduced to one;
To keep my Lord by faith in view;—
This strength supplies, and motives too.

I see him lead a suffering life,
Patient amidst reproach and strife;
And from his pattern courage take,
To bear and suffer for his sake.
Upon the Cross I see him bleed,
And by the sight from guilt am freed;
This sight destroys the life of sin,
And quickens heavenly life within.

CHAPTER XI.

Counterfeit Bills.—The religion of imitation, not experience.—Faith trembling and self-distrustful, unbelief presuming and self-confident.

Among the exploits of faith enumerated by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find the crossing of the Red Sea put down to the credit of the Israelites, in a striking contrast with the ineffectual attempt of the Egyptians to do the same. "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned." This last clause of the fate of the Egyptians is not a mere expletive. It is difficult to see why the Apostle should bestow this notice upon the Egyptians buried in the sea, while the people of God had gone triumphantly over, unless there were some additional illustrations of the nature of *faith* to be gained by such contrast. Accordingly, as it is an instance of precisely the same act, performed by believers and unbelievers, with results precisely and to the uttermost extreme opposite, it shows in the strongest manner the comprehensive and decisive nature and operation of the principle of faith, as determining the character and destiny. The same things done in faith and done without faith are entirely different. Externally, they may be precisely the same things in every respect, and yet no two things could be more dissimilar. In the one case they are righteousness and peace, in the other they are guilt and condemnation; in the one case they are life, in the other, death. This law or principle runs through the whole character and exercises of our

spiritual being; and it is the nature of our spiritual being which determines that of our temporal. As a man thinketh in his heart towards God and eternity, so is he in reality towards man and the things of this world. If his spiritual being is not under the law of faith and love, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, then his whole being, spiritual and temporal, is under the law of sin and death. There is nothing good in him, and nothing of life in him, if there be not goodness and life towards God.

Now to illustrate the nature of faith and unbelief in particular duties, let us take that of prayer. The great work of faith is to come to Christ, to rest on Christ, to be acquainted with Christ, to realize his preciousness, to have the life hid with him in God. Now this communion of the soul with Christ and this life of the soul in and upon him, is maintained mainly by prayer. A man *comes* to Christ by prayer in the first instance; coming to Christ by prayer may be the very first *exercise* of faith; faith indeed is just a believing *look* of the soul *to* Christ, and this look itself is prayer. The soul may begin the *form* of prayer without faith, and may continue the exercise of prayer, in form, without faith; and ordinarily the soul, when first convinced of sin, does begin in this way; begins prayer ignorantly and in unbelief, before it looks to Christ, and rests on Christ, and finds Christ, savingly and by faith.

The first time a soul cries out Lord have mercy on me, it does not always see Christ. It may use the language of one looking towards Christ, but at first it is in great blindness. Nevertheless, the instructions in the gospel are so plain on this point, every soul is pointed so directly to Christ, and all ministers and Christians and new converts unite with such earnestness in urging the convicted sinner to the Saviour, that a soul with the least degree of sincerity cannot help endeavoring to find Christ, cannot help looking in that direction, however ignorantly and blindly. Although scarcely knowing as yet what to make of Christ, and feeling as though it were addressing a deity

in the dark, a being of whose existence it is hardly convinced, or has hardly any conception, the wounded soul nevertheless cries out in bitterness, Lord have mercy on me!

Now it is ordinarily while in this attitude, while in the repetition of these efforts after Christ, while endeavoring thus, according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Word, to look towards Christ, that the soul of the sinner catches the first real, believing, understanding glimpse of Christ. It begins to find him in prayer, and in most cases the discovery is very gradual; it is not a sudden finding, a burst of light from heaven, but a light that comes little by little, often increasing like the dawn. With every sincere effort of the soul in prayer there is more and more knowledge and comfort, more and more spiritual discernment, more and more sight of Christ, and not a mere feeling after him, if haply the soul might find him. Thus the soul becomes acquainted with him in prayer, learns the language and experience of the Christian in prayer, has the affections drawn out after Christ in prayer, is educated by the Holy Spirit in prayer, grows up into the Christian life in prayer, becomes exercised, drilled, so to speak, as a soldier, in the Christian conflict in prayer, passes the Red Sea, by faith, in prayer.

All this discipline, with some, is more gradual, with others more rapid; but ordinarily it begins in blind and self-despairing efforts; efforts in which the soul experiences nothing but the sense of sin and unbelief, insensibility and blindness, and seems to itself, even in the work of prayer, to be almost an atheist, to be praying without even believing in the being of a God or a Saviour. It is thus taught how great a thing is faith, how divine a gift of God to the soul, and how much faith it needs simply to believe that God is, and that he is the rewarder of all who diligently seek him. Ordinarily the practical conscious life and comfort of the soul in prayer, and the experience of faith in prayer, and the growth of the soul in the sight and know-

ledge of Christ in prayer are as gradual and from as hidden, small, and blind beginnings, as the growth of a plant from the imperceptible and decaying germ in the earth, decaying, yet quickening, and showing itself to sight, first the little, delicate, tender blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. So the beginnings of Christ in the soul grow out of the decaying of self and the quickening of grace, and they show themselves and are found out and developed in the exercises of the soul in prayer.

Then having thus found Christ in prayer, the soul continues to commune with him in prayer, to throw itself upon him in prayer, daily, to walk with him by a life of faith in prayer, and to serve him by prayer, obedience, and the watchful performance of duty. It does all this now, more and more, not to find Christ, but as having found him, not to purchase anything, but out of love, as loving him, and being loved by him, not to gain pardon and heaven, by merit, but to obey Christ and to please him, to be made more and more like him, and to be filled more and more with his fulness, in his knowledge and love. This is the life of faith, entered into and maintained, mainly through the instrumentality of prayer. Prayer itself is a life.

But now, here is another path, although apparently the same way. Another man attempts to come to Christ by prayer, but without faith; to come to Christ and to enter heaven by prayer, just as you would expect to enter to the enjoyment of a feast or the exhibition of a great picture, by having bought your ticket, and presented it at the door of entrance. Every time such a soul comes to prayer, it is so much work done for wages expected. There is no humble, penitent looking of the soul to Christ in this case, and no sincere endeavor to look to him and rely upon him; and therefore, while this is the attitude of the soul, there can be no sight of him, no finding of him, no acquaintance with him. Christ is not what the soul is seeking, in such a case, but safety; not holiness and healing by Christ, but

a policy of insurance. This is a mere Romish way of prayer, as a staircase of penance, and of observances in the way of merit. It is coming to Christ just only as a superstitious soul goes to the priest with money to buy itself out of purgatory, or to get a bill of exemption. This may be coming to prayer, but it is not coming to Christ by prayer.

It is just an attempt to gain heaven by works, by self-righteousness. The soul is on entirely a wrong track, not *towards* Christ but *away* from him, not of repentance and faith, but of pride and unbelief. And yet it may seem to be the same track of prayer. Nay, it might be in the very same words of prayer. The self-same expressions, used by the soul in the first supposed instance, as expressions of faith and love, might be written or printed in a book, and might be repeated and renewed by the soul in this second supposed instance, just as often and with just the same assiduity as in the first; and yet in the second case it would be a going away from Christ, while in the first case it was a coming to him; in the second case it would be a growing ignorance of Christ, while in the first case it was a growing acquaintance with him; in the second case it would be a course of selfishness and unbelief, while in the first case it was a process of humility and faith; in the second case it would be the ruin of the soul, while in the first case it was its salvation. In the one case it would be an attempt to be saved by works, which would be destruction; in the other an endeavor to be saved by Christ, which would be salvation.

This is the meaning of Paul, when he showed that the believing Gentiles, throwing themselves on Christ, were saved and became holy, when the unbelieving Jews, throwing themselves on their own merits in having kept the law, remained unholy and were lost. "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed

after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because, they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone in Zion." Even so, a man following righteousness to get Christ, makes righteousness his Saviour, and rejects Christ, throwing himself on his own righteousness, which in such a case is miserable pride, in unbelief, ignorance, and sin, not accepting Christ. But a man following Christ without righteousness, but to get righteousness *in* Christ, confesses and feels his own utter guilt and vileness, and throws himself on Christ alone, to be saved by grace, by faith, the mere, free, rich, sovereign, and undeserved gift of God's love.

Thus it is that the doing of precisely the same things may lead in the one case *to* Christ, in the other *away* from him; may be in the one case piety, in the other sin; may lead in the one case to heaven, in the other down to hell. Precisely the same things! The same steps taken, the same words uttered, in the same number of times, with the same observances, and the same labor and care, may be salvation in the one case, and ruin in the other. Because, in true religion all is faith, and all depends on the state of the soul, and prayer is not prayer, which is offered as purchase money, or maintained as merit and hire, and because there must be love, or there is neither holiness nor heaven.

So it is, that precisely the same way may be taken to cross the Red Sea, but in the one case it will be death, though in the other it was life. It may be apparently by the same stepping-stones, and the proud chariot wheels of the Egyptians may run in exactly the same tracks on the bottom of the sea, with the rude carts of the Israelites; but there is all the difference that there is between salvation and perdition, between holiness and sin. And yet, precisely the same way! It may be as precisely the same, as the words of prayer repeated from a prayer-book, and the same words uttered from the heart; which in the first

case might be the labor of an unbelieving hireling, or even the sport and mockery of a scoffing fool, but in the last, the humility and penitence of a sincere Christian. So great is the difference between the prayer of faith and prayer without faith, or prayer rolled over like the beads of a Pagan, or the chariot wheels of the Egyptians. And as they are heaven-wide different in themselves, so in their results. The same sea that prayer and faith keep open, self-merit and self-complacency bring down in great drowning billows on the soul. This sea of guilt and condemnation, through which a man must pass to Christ, must be crossed by faith, can be crossed in no other way; and God only can open it, can keep back its billows from drowning the soul. True faith is small at first, and trembles and is afraid, but at length is encouraged by God's Word, and from one step is led on to another in safety, humbly casting all on Christ. So the sea is crossed, and the soul stands on the other side, and looks back in wonder, gratitude, and joy, and can hardly yet believe its own experience. But it has found Christ in prayer, and knows how to rest upon him.

Pride and unbelief, on the other hand, tread at first very confidently; they are as haughty and speedy as the Egyptians; they say, We will make the same passage, we will be saved by doing so and so; but down comes the sea; it is only faith that finds in prayer the way to Christ. And Christ and his gospel to the believing soul are a savor of life, but to the unbelieving soul only of condemnation and death. It is not the *steps* that a believer takes that save him, but it is Christ that saves him, and if he does not look to Christ, the very same steps will but destroy him. The Egyptians do not see who opens the way, who holds back the billows; they think if they take the same steps, that the route will carry them also safely, the path will save them. So they rush on confidently, but it is only to be choked in the waters. So unbelief will, as it were, take heaven by storm; a storm of duties, merits, observ-

ances; and it rushes on, but soon finds itself buffeting the tempest, sinking like a stone, the waters too deep to be forded. Unbelief, setting out to be its own saviour, destroys all possibility of salvation, and encounters destruction. Faith, in self-despair, trusting all to Christ, finds strength and security. Unbelief, exalting self, and keeping that alone in view, falls into the arms of Satan; while faith, abasing and excluding self, falls into the arms of the Redeemer. Unbelief seeks its own life, and finds death; while faith, entering on the death of self, finds life eternal.

A great and learned man once labelled a volume of Socinian Tracts in his library with this inscription: "Salvation made easy, or every man his own Redeemer." It was a good satire; but the true title would be, Salvation made impossible, and every man his own destroyer. This mistake of self-salvation comes from ignorance and unbelief of self-ruin; for no man ever dreams of saving himself who is made truly sensible that he has ruined himself. Real conviction of sin must either lead to despair or to Christ, and *certainly* to despair if *not* to Christ. And that self-salvation which seemed easy at first *without* conviction of sin, only plunges the soul into the depths of misery. A man who goes into despair now because of conviction, may come to Christ afterwards; his very despair may drive him to Christ; just as the Israelites, shut up in utter hopelessness at the Red Sea, were compelled to throw themselves on God. But a man full of *self-confidence* now, for *want* of conviction, is sure to come to despair in the end. So let a man try to ride in the chariot of his own works, prayers, goodness, amiableness, uprightness, into heaven, or over the Red Sea of his guilt; he may set out with great expectations, and may have an army with him; but God speedily takes off his chariot wheels, and he drives heavily, and then what he trusted in for support and safety only entangles him and sinks him, when God lets loose the billows. His armor and his har-

ness carry him down like lead in the mighty waters. His self-righteousness is even worse for him than his sins. His sins might bring him to Christ, if he felt them; but his self-righteousness is the very blind of Satan over his soul; it keeps him from seeing either his sins or his Saviour. His faith in self makes him an unbeliever at once in sin, in Christ, and in Satan; he thinks he has no sin but what he can cure by his own reformation; he thinks he needs no Saviour but that cure; and he thinks, consequently, that for him there is neither devil nor hell. If he believed heartily, truly, experimentally, either in sin, or Satan, or Christ, he would renounce self, and hold to Christ only; but believing in self, there is nothing else in which he can or will believe, except as a part of self, or auxiliary to it. Yea, the indictment in Isaiah may be taken up and issued against him. Thou hast trusted in thy wickedness; thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thy heart, I am, and none else beside me. Thou settest thyself as the egotist and idol of the universe, thine own only object of belief and adoration. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth; and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off; and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know. Stand now, with thine enchantments, thou god of thine own creation, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherewith thou hast labored from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators of thy divinity, the calculators and vouchers for the horoscope of thy self-righteous theology, stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver *themselves* from this power of the flame. Thus shall they

be unto thee, with whom thou hast labored; thy merchants from thy youth in the wares of thy flattery, thy self-delusion; none shall save thee. Moreover, because ye have said we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement, your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it, and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it. Vast as the robe of a man's self-righteousness may be, it was never yet large enough to cover the sinful soul.

So then, there is no agreement that can stand, but an agreement with God for Christ's sake. Salvation is wholly of Christ, by faith, not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong, but to the contrite soul that trembleth at God's Word, and out of weakness is made *strong*. If thou standest at the Red Sea, and thinkest that thou wilt cross in thine own chariot, thou art an Egyptian, and the waters will cover thee. If thou hast no fear, it is because of thine ignorance. There are many things that unbelief does not tremble at, and that do not stagger the man of sense, but at which faith trembles, knowing the difficulties and dangers. Unbelief resorts to *sense* for encouragement, but faith to Christ. Sense is always visible, but Christ is not. Sense is a beast that starts fair, but throws its rider, or founders in the Slough of Despond, and is lost in the blackness of darkness. Faith seems to sense to be walking in darkness, but issues in everlasting light. The very essence of faith is to walk by things unseen. Faith regards an unseen Saviour, and this is the very trial of the soul. Art thou ready, God says, and willing, to quit self and sense, and at the foot of the cross cry for mercy and trust for mercy, as a lost sinner? Wilt thou make application to Christ, wilt thou trust in him, wilt thou rest upon him, simply as

thou findest him revealed in God's Word? That is the very first exercise of faith, such a belief in an unseen Saviour as makes you apply to him for mercy; this done, there follows more, there springs up an experience, out of which thenceforward springs a greater faith. "Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory." It is in this sense that faith is described as the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. The moment faith is exercised, then there is an experimental demonstration to the soul, a manifestation to faith of that Saviour and those realities, which sense cannot see. Then arise love, joy, peace, all the fruits of the Spirit; but they all wait for faith; they wait till the soul rests on Christ, and if the soul waits for them, as a sort of sensible encouragement to come to Christ, it will wait in vain, it will never come to him. The soul's encouragement to come to Christ is in its own ruin out of Christ, its utter guilt and misery, and not in any fancied grace that it will have before it comes to him, as a sort of swimming-belt on which to venture to him. No! all the grace it wants before coming to him is that of faith in its own guilt and ruin; that is the only faith in self to be allowed, to be tolerated for a moment. We come to Christ out of self-ruin. Lord, save me, I perish. Nay, we come to Christ out of the death of self, and when self is weakest, then faith is strongest, and in proportion as self is lost sight of, Christ becomes visible, Christ rises on the soul, as the Sun of Righteousness, and floods the soul at length with his light, and takes possession of the soul for ever and ever.

What am I?
A poor sinner!
Lord, my life is waste and wanted.
THOU must be the sole beginner
Of that mighty death to self,
In which Life again is planted.

Then shall I,
A poor sinner,
Like the plant from dying kernel,
Rise with Thee, my Life's beginner,
Find in Thee my second self,
Reign with Thee in Life Eternal.

This is the language of an humble, contrite, believing heart. Self-confidence is all gone, a simple reliance on Christ and humble love to him have taken the place of everything else in the soul. How beautifully the Poet Cowper describes the happy change in one of his unaffected, child-like hymns!

No strength of nature can suffice
To serve the Lord aright;
And what she has, she misapplies,
For want of clearer light.

How long beneath the law I lay
In bondage and distress;
I toiled the precept to obey,
But toiled without success.

Then, to abstain from *outward* sin
Was more than I could do,
Now, if I feel its power within,
I feel I hate it too.

Then, all my servile works were done
A righteousness to raise;
Now, freely chosen in the Son,
I freely choose his ways.

"What shall I do," was then the word,
"That I may worthier grow?"
What shall I render to the Lord?
Is my inquiry now.

To see the Law by Christ fulfilled,
And hear his pardoning voice,
Changes a slave into a child,
And duty into choice.

CHAPTER XII.

Counterfeit Bills continued.—Formalism and Faith, Pride and Contrition in contrast.—The power of the element of self-despair.

THE parables and narratives of Christ are wonderful things in their many-sided reflections and emanations of the light. The sunbeams fall in shafts of beauty and power through both characters and facts, illustrating Divine Truth, and making it live before us. Spiritual abstractions come forth in definite form and outline; the different graces of the Spirit are seen in action; the feelings of the heart and moods of opinion and habits of life in whole classes receive a realization through the portraits of individuals.

The Divine sketches of the Pharisee and Publican at their devotions, each in his own way, are worth whole volumes of dissertations on the workings and evidences of a contrite spirit, and the essence of justifying faith and acceptable prayer. Of the Pharisee it is said, He stood and prayed thus with himself. It is not lightly that this description has been chosen. He stood and prayed thus with himself! Aye, and himself only! There was the name of God, but no god but self in the prayer. Two men went up to the Temple to pray. "Two went to pray?" asked the Poet Crashaw;

> *Two* went to *pray*? O rather say
> One went to brag, the other to pray:

One stands up close, and treads on high,
Where the other dares not lift his eye:

One nearer to God's altar trod,
The other to the altar's GOD.

Altar prayers are common, and we have heard of prayers offered to an audience, the most eloquent prayers ever addressed to an enlightened audience. There have been such things reported. But here is a man praying to himself! To pray to an altar, or an audience, instead of God, is a singular and obstinate superstition. But then, how strange, how ridiculous, in secret to pray to oneself, pretending to pray to God! It is difficult to say which would be worse; it is not difficult to say which is most common. God, I thank thee! Divine human nature, I thank thee! Self-respect and dignity of my soul, I thank thee! The god he was addressing was as much the god of his own fancy, as if it had been a stamped wax wafer held before him. It was a thing that had grown up and been formed among the corruptions of his own heart; no better than the idols, which in times of old they stole from one another, and hid among their household stuffs, and sat upon them. It was a conception of his own, a self-flattering deity, down among his own thoughts, that he prayed with, communed with; dignifying it with the mere intellectual idea of God, gathered from the Hebrew Scriptures, and revealed in the state-religion of his country.

Now for one prayer addressed to an audience, there are probably very many addressed thus to self. This is as common, to say the least, as the character of a Pharisee; and we are all Pharisees, unless we are Publicans. Indeed, if we be even sincere Christians, and yet have our hearts wandering upon other things, while we seem to be addressing God, what is that but praying with oneself? But that is not what is here meant; not the mere wandering of the thoughts from God in the midst of prayer, but the prayer

of self-deception, pride, self-complacency, and hypocrisy. He stood and prayed thus with himself: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." How did he know what other men were? His own outside, and the outside of other men, was all he was thinking of. And he thought God would be deceived by the mockery of such a comparison. He was deceiving himself, and who in the universe should have a keener discernment than he!

Not as other men are, nor even as this Publican! This is not a rare spirit. "Well, I thank God, let my follies be what they may, I am not such a fool as these Methodists. I can at least be decent in my religion. I have sense enough to prefer a good prayer to illiterate mysticism and groans." And then there is another form of thanksgiving that some might think right the reverse of the Pharisee's, but which is just the same thing: "Well, I thank God, let my follies be what they may, I am no hypocrite; I don't make a profession of religion and then go away and cheat my neighbors." No, but you can cheat them without *any* profession, and you *would* do it, with a strong enough temptation, if left of God. Yea, perhaps you are eating up the sins of God's people, and crying out at the same time, I thank God this is not *my* food. This liturgy of the Pharisees has a great many forms. It was much longer than that of the poor Publican.

God, I thank thee that I am not as other men, nor even as this Publican. I do not come up to the temple to pray, without having performed the other duties of religion. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. I stick fast to the traditions of the elders. I build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous. I pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin. I never eat bread without washing my hands. I make broad my phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of my garments. My fellow-men respect me, and call me Rabbi, and give me the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues. God, I thank thee for all this

My heart overflows with gratitude. What a blessing that I am not as other men, as this Publican!

See now the writing that comes out upon the wall in answer to all this; hear now the inaudible voice in the Temple from the Holy of Holies. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, whited sepulchres, graves that appear not, and men walk over them, not in the least aware of the rottenness that festers beneath. Woe unto you, righteous outwardly, but within full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, paying tithes of mint and rue and all manner of herbs, but trampling upon justice, mercy, and faith; making clean the outside of the cup and platter, but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Woe unto you, with your uppermost seats and greetings and prayers! for which ye shall receive the greater damnation. And for you all, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Such is the sum of this man's prayers, the end of this man's righteousness. He returned to his house with a proud and rotten heart, a man of a class; condemned by their very prayers, and abandoned as reprobate by Christ himself, in the most burning and tremendous denunciations ever uttered.

Now turn to the other, the poor, trembling, self-despairing Publican. God be merciful to me a sinner! There is nothing of self here but self-despair. This man is not praying with himself, nor to himself, counting over the roll of his observances, his tithes, his fastings, the coats of paint and gilding over the rotten sepulchre of his heart. This man prays to God, out of the depths of guilt and misery; his soul can do nothing but groan after God. For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity, for it is great. And so was his prayer great; a great prayer, though in but half a dozen words. It was prayer to God, from the

depths of a penitent heart, and he went down to his house justified, rather than the other.

Nevertheless, he was not justified by his prayer, nor saved by his prayer. He did not himself expect to be. He did not come up to the temple for that purpose, but just to confess his sins, and throw himself on God's mercy. He was justified and saved only by God's mercy, not by his own prayer, nor his own repentance. He could not have been justified and saved *without* repentance, but he was not saved *by* it. Just as the lepers could not have been cleansed without going to the priests, but were not saved by going, but by Christ; and just as Paul's ship and company could not have been saved without the soldiers abiding in it, but yet were not saved by that, but by God's mercy; just so this poor Publican could not have been saved without that broken-hearted prayer, without that contrition of soul which impelled the prayer, but yet he was not justified and saved *by* that, but by Christ only. His humility was excellent, his contrition excellent, his prayer excellent, but he never dreamed of that, and it was nothing of that that saved him, but only Christ. And if he had dreamed of that, if he had worked himself up into this groaning after God, to bring that frame into the temple as a ground of justification, it would have spoiled the whole. His prayer would have been no whit better than the Pharisee's. He would have stood and prayed *with himself*, just like the Pharisee, God, I thank thee that I have such excellent prayers to bring thee, and not the poor miserable formalism and heartless tithe-gatherings of this Pharisee. There are such dealings of pride, sometimes, even with groans and prayers, such merchandise made of tears and importunities, by which deluded souls think to merit heaven. And the mistake sometimes is not discovered even by souls truly convinced of sin, till after much struggling in the mire of their own guilt and misery.

Now this picture of these two persons going up to the

temple to pray shows us in the first place our complete misery, ignorance, blindness, and helplessness in ourselves. Self-despair is a great grace; and a great and blessed discipline it is, cost what it may, that brings a man to it. Self-despair is the first step in the ladder of faith and grace in Christ Jesus, whose top reaches to heaven. But oh, what a discipline of buffeting and inward suffering and misery it sometimes costs to bring a man to this step. Yea, most men are very far from this first step; wandering over the earth, not like Jacob, sleeping with stones for their pillows and dreaming of heaven, but wide awake in all the heedlessness of self-confidence; planning for self, living for self, cultivating self, refining self, polishing self, burning incense to self, cajoling self, worshipping self, puffing up self with pride, blinding self, deceiving self, seeking self, raising self, by self, to heaven, and thus excluding self *from* heaven, and making nothing certain *for* self *but* self, which really is nothing but hell. The Pharisee goes up to the temple, and up to heaven, as he thinks, by self; but it is his way down to hell. The poor publican goes down to hell, as he thinks, by self, and he really sees and feels the intolerable corruptions of his nature so deeply, so truly, so self-despairingly, that he seems in the abyss of woe; but it is his way up to heaven; for he that exalteth himself shall be abased, while he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. The Pharisee, by the discipline of self, is full of self-pride; the publican, by the discipline of self under grace, is full of despair; the publican has his foot on the first round of the ladder that lifts him out of self and hell into Christ and heaven; the Pharisee is clean the other side of the globe, going down to Satan.

This picture shows us again the great danger of a counterfeit piety. The very duties of religion, if self be the soul of them, are nothing but guilt; they are the wolf in sheep's clothing; nay, they are the wolf dressed up like a proud lion. Where there is faith, there is humility; but where there is not faith, there is nothing but pride and

self-deceit. Therefore, whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Now this counterfeit is easily made. It costs indeed much labor, and is made with a very sincere desire and determination to have it available. And it may seem hard that it should not be available, that it should be so severely rejected and penaltied. But consider that it is of base material; and what would become of the circulating medium of heaven, if this false, vile, spurious coin of self, with heaven's forgery, should get prevalent? Moreover, whose fault, whose will, whose obstinacy is the self-deceit and the counterfeit? It is the soul's own, against God's instructions, God's warnings. It is just because the soul will not give up self to God, that the counterfeit imposes on it. A soul that chooses God, Christ, and heaven's will, instead of self, will hate the counterfeit, will loathe the production of self; if that coinage gets into the Christian's purse, it will burn in it like fire, it will create misery, it will make him hate it.

And if a soul is so blind, that it cannot discern between self and Christ, between prayer manufactured as a ticket of entrance to heaven, and prayer which is just the humble confession of sin, the expression of a penitent reliance on Christ, and the breathing of an humble soul after him, where does this blindness come from? Why, from the adoration of self, from the utter disregard of God and supreme regard to self, from the love of sin and the disrelish of holiness. Can God accept the counterfeit money that such a soul receives and passes? Admit that it be coined with groans and tears, that it be not the mere going up to the temple, and reading over the catalogue of one's duties; that it be self-penance and cryings out for mercy; yet if there be no faith, what can be done with it? What is it worth? The ground may with great labor have brought forth nettles, but for what are they good, but to be burned? The monks of a superstitious creed may have spent days and nights in groanings and scourgings; but the character is not a whit altered. After a night's

sleepless watchings and sacrificings, can the counterfeit coin be any the more worth acceptance?

Counterfeit money always costs labor. Some gangs of counterfeiters labor harder on the productions of their base coinage, than the most industrious men for the good of society. And they always have a mixture of good metal. But all the great cost, pains, toil, self-denial, labor, and danger they have undergone cannot shield them from the penalty, nor make the coin go. If the die be not that of the government, it must be condemned. And so, if prayers and tears and labors after heaven have not Christ's signature, the bills are forged, and must be condemned. And this the more severely, because Christ always stood ready to give his signature, had it been asked; had the bills been given up to him, to do with them as he pleased, and not used for self without regard to him, they should have been accepted. He would have put his own name on the back of them, and so made them good, even though before they were worthless. The very act of bringing them to him would have legalized them. But as self-possessions, self-complacencies, and self-riches, they are forgeries and vile.

We see, then, our entire dependence upon Christ. It is this which self-despair teaches. In ourselves how blind, ignorant, proud, deluded, self-seeking, helpless, hopeless. At every point turned away from God, and unlike him; dependent on him for grace to see Christ, even when Christ is directly before us. And even when convinced of sin, and anxious after heaven, still so blinded by selfishness, that we think we will gain heaven by praying, laboring, scourging, mourning, anything, everything, rather than letting all things go in self-despair, trusting to Christ; blinded thus until God opens our eyes. What wretched, lost, utterly miserable sinners!

Do we exaggerate in all this? God forbid. It is not possible. And the worst of all is, that we do not see nor feel this misery. But in the midst of it all, we march up

to the temple with the Pharisee, and though we have nothing but groans, and forced confessions of guilt and misery to bring with us, yet even out of these we extract the plea of self-confidence and self-righteousness. We pray thus with ourselves, God, I thank thee that I can at least bring sorrowful penance and good desires, and am thus on the way back from my sins, the way of salvation. Certainly, God, thou wilt have mercy on me after such long groaning and praying. What perpetuated, insidious, insinuating, hidden, subtle forms and wiles of self! And what misery, what wretchedness, to be thus under the dominion and deceptions of this lying, sinful, selfish self! Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me!

Aye! here is the point of self-despair, the soul sinking, lost, undone, convinced of it at length, and out of the very stress and agony of the consciousness of sinking into hell. crying out to Christ for mercy! Here is the very point where mercy can come, safely, lastingly. Here self is down, abased, quitted, lost; nothing left but a mere outcry of despairing faith to Christ. It is just such utterly lost souls that Christ came to seek and to save. And is not this infinitely better than to take a soul's counterfeit money? Is not this a merciful refusal on the part of Christ, and a most merciful and gracious discipline, to strip the soul of self before blessing it? You perhaps think Christ a hard master, because he says, Deny thyself, and, He that seeketh his life shall lose it; but he can be a kind and good master in no other way. If he should let you into heaven before you have been beaten down into this despair of self, and crucified, it would be no heaven to you. You must indeed be crucified *with* Christ, before you can be saved *in* Christ.

And now, art thou willing to learn this by experience? Dost thou wish to be thus humbled, and crucified, and self-despairing in Christ? Then come *to* Christ. For he only can be the beginning of humility, freedom, and mercy to thy soul But alas, this way of salvation for us is only too

easy. If we were shut up to the law alone, and the burden of guilt were thrown and left upon us at the gates of hell, and no Saviour offered, perhaps then we would be crying out *for* a Saviour. If the way of salvation had been so plain to Luther at the beginning, in the midst of his ignorance, as it is to us in the midst of our light, very likely we should never have heard of Luther's religious experience. That experience grew out of self-despair.

My God! how perfect are thy ways!
But mine polluted are;
Sin twines itself about my praise,
And slides into my prayer.

When I would speak what Thou hast done
To save me from my sin,
I cannot make thy mercies known,
But self-applause creeps in.

Divine desire, that holy flame,
Thy grace creates in me;
Alas! impatience is its name,
When it returns to thee.

This heart a fount of evil thoughts,
No constant rest can know,
While self upon the surface floats,
Still bubbling from below.

Let others in the gaudy dress
Of fancied merit shine,
The Lord shall be my righteousness,
The Lord for ever mine.

CHAPTER XIII.

Faith guided of God.—Unbelief left to itself.—The separating pillar.—Sunshine and darkness in the same dispensation.—The source of infidelity.

If there are no great incidents on a journey, little ones may be useful. Every day's occurrences have their purpose, trifling though they may seem. My trunk shuts with a spring. One day in travelling, after I had opened my trunk, I carelessly threw the key upon the top of the articles in it, and then, forgetting this circumstance, I shut down the lid, and there it was, fast closed, with the key itself inside. I could not get it open in any way, but had to send for a locksmith. I was thinking afterwards what possible good could come out of this accident, which cost me on a journey some loss of time, and seemed very foolish. In the first place, the locksmith and I entered into a religious conversation, while he was at work upon the trunk. Some good, very possibly, came out of that. In the second place, it might teach me to be more careful. In the third place, it made me think of the need and office of faith, for the use of our knowledge.

Faith is to the understanding with its treasures of sacred knowledge, what a key is to a well filled trunk. You cannot get at these treasures, for the use of them, without violence, but by the exercise of faith. It is faith which opens the understanding, and shows God and divine things in it, and the divine meaning of the things which the understanding encompasses. But faith is above the understanding. Now some men make it inferior. They

put the understanding uppermost. They shut down the lid of the understanding upon faith, which is about as bad as my shutting up the key of my trunk inside of it. The key was of no use whatever in that position, and all my goods and wearing apparel, and books besides, were of no use to me while thus shut up, if I could not get at them. And just so, though a man possess all knowledge, yet if he have not faith to get at its true meaning, and make a right application of it, it is of no use; he must have the key. But some religionists wish to pack all mysteries into their understanding, and the key besides. When this is the case there is no way but to have it taken to the locksmith. And the locksmith can tell any man that his trunk is a finite thing, yea, though he should bring to be mended a trunk as big and as splendid as St. Paul's Cathedral. It is a finite thing, and cannot hold all mysteries, but only some fragments and germs of truth, some beginnings of knowledge, something given to him of God, and some poor and partial guesses of his own. And the bigger he thinks it is, and the more he prides himself upon it, the less of real truth it will hold, and the more easily it gets out of order, and then he himself can do nothing with it.

When the heart gets out of order, only he that made the heart can set it right. Only he who knoweth all its springs, sees precisely what is wrong, and knows just where and how to apply the remedy. Even when God has given us faith, and the key of the trunk is not lost, the lock itself may be out of order. A constant waiting upon God is necessary.

> For Reason still, unless divinely taught,
> Whate'er she learns, learns nothing as she ought.
> The lamp of Revelation only shows
> What human wisdom cannot but oppose.
> That man, in nature's richest mantle clad,
> And graced with all philosophy can add,
> Though fair without, and luminous within,
> Is still the progeny and heir of sin.

Thus taught, down falls the plumage of his pride,
He feels his need of an unerring guide,
And knows that falling he shall rise no more,
Unless the power that bade him stand restore.
This is indeed philosophy; this known,
Makes wisdom, worthy of the name, his own,
And without this, whatever he discuss,
Whether the space between the stars and us,
Whether he measure earth, compute the sea,
Weigh sunbeams, carve a fly, or split a flea,
The solemn trifler, with his boasted skill,
Toils much, and is a solemn trifler still.
Blind was he born, and his misguided eyes,
Grown dim in trifling studies, blind he dies.

There is no help for this, but in God's grace, and He who is the Light of the World has said, "For judgment came I into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." And this is a declaration which is but the counterpart of the saying, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. They that are whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick." The first thing is for men to be convinced that they are sick and blind; they who say that they see and that they are whole, must, by Christ's coming and judgment, be made sick and blind; then will they cry, Lord, heal me! Lord, that I may receive my sight! And then the Great Physician gives health and sight.

But even after this, sin still works derangement, and if there be carelessness, great and disastrous derangement. He who, by his own sweet and powerful grace, sets the mind in order, he it is alone, who by the same grace can keep it in order. This the beloved Christian Poet, Cowper, whom we have quoted above, knew from experience.

Man is a harp whose chords elude the sight,
Each yielding harmony, disposed aright.
The screws reversed (a task which, if he please,
God in a moment executes with ease),
Ten thousand thousand strings at once go loose,
Lost, till he tune them, all their power and use.

Very many things are to be guarded against; God's Word is to be constantly and carefully hidden in the heart, and self-love and self-prejudice are to be watched as one would watch an enemy; for it is only in God's light that we can continue to see light.

"I once saw," said Mr. Cecil, "this subject forcibly illustrated. A watchmaker told me that a gentleman had put an exquisite watch into his hands, that went irregularly. It was as perfect a piece of work as was ever made. He took it to pieces and put it together again twenty times. No manner of defect was to be discovered, and yet the watch went intolerably. At last it struck him that possibly the balance-wheel might have been near a magnet. On applying a needle to it, he found his suspicion true. The steel-work in the other parts of the watch went as well as possible with a new wheel. If the soundest mind be magnetized by any predilection, it must act irregularly."

Who has not seen a humanly magnetized mind thus working, and the more powerful and active, the greater the wrong and the error. The pride of the mind in such a case makes it quite blind, and it sometimes does but make sport for the Philistines, instead of advancing the kingdom of God; and at the last, when it thinks that by a mighty effort it is pulling down the temple of error upon the heads of the followers of Dagon, it does but bring the fragments of truth upon itself. The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein. And the just walketh and liveth in them by his faith, not by the pride of his understanding. To the eye of faith, and to the eye of the natural man, or to faith as magnetized and obscured by the influence of the natural man, the same truths and ways of God present a spectacle wholly different.

In this view, how full of beauty are the lessons of the miracle wrought of God between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and how full of sacred lessons are the glory and beauty of the miracle! "And

the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed, and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to the Egyptians, but it gave light by night to Israel; so that the one came not near the other all the night."

The light of this miracle shines through our whole Christian life. When the children of Israel took their departure from Egypt, and journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, God led them. At first the way was plain, so plain, that no visible angel needed to march before them to point out the direction. They were to make haste out of Egypt the nearest way towards the region whither God would bring them; that done, God would go before them more visibly. So when a man leaves his native City of Destruction on the pilgrimage towards heaven, he must flee from the wrath to come, following in the nearest way what light he sees already in God's Word, that light always shining in the way to Christ; and when he has once heartily started, he will find God day by day more visibly interposing and guiding him. When they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham in the edge of the wilderness, then the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people. It was always a light and guidance for them, and in the approach of difficulty, it was a protection to them from their enemies. On this great occasion of the passage of the Red Sea, it went behind them, and stood between them and their enemies, and all night long, in that encampment by the sea, the same cloud was a pillar of light to the Israelites, dispelling their fears and pouring a bright radiance over the whole scene before them, while it was a double darkness to the Egyptians, filling them with dread, and

making it impossible to stir from their lines till morning.

Now this was a very significant and beautiful emblem or symbol of what takes place between the soul and God, just according to the character of the affections. The way of the Lord is strength and light to the upright, but destruction to the workers of iniquity. Whoso is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein. So in Isaiah, Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to the unbelieving and disobedient. So precisely the same gospel, and the same way of the Lord in it, shall be a savor of life to the believing soul, of death to the unbelieving. Not another and different way, but the same way. This pillar of cloud, and the same pillar, was a guide and a light to the believing, but a darkness and terror to the unbelieving. In the approach of difficulty, it was both a protection to one and a destruction to the other.

This is the simple working and result of faith and unbelief. It is not any arbitrary arrangement on the part of God, but the presentation, on the part of man, of different qualities, elements, and actions, to the operation of the same attributes. The same truth, that saves a believing soul, destroys an unbelieving. Not a different side of the same truth, but precisely the same side; as, for instance, God's forgiving mercy in Christ to the sinner, offered to two men, precisely in the same way, proves, to the one who believingly accepts of it, salvation both from sin and from misery, but to the other, who simply does not accept of it, but remains just as before, a deeper guilt and a greater misery. Precisely the same salvation is changed, by unbelief, from a blessing, into condemnation and a curse. And offer what side of truth you will, it is the

same. It is not because the believer experiences one side of truth, and the unbeliever another and an opposite side, that there is to them all the difference between life and death, but because they both experience the same side, but offer to its operation qualities in themselves entirely different. One sees the same truth as the other, and in the same position; but with different feelings, different sensibilities, a different character; and therefore the appearance and effect of the same truth must in each case be totally opposite.

Just so, it was not because a particular side of the pillar of cloud was turned towards the Egyptians that the whole appeared a thick and frightful darkness; for if the pillar had been turned with the other side towards the Egyptians, then that would have been equally dark, while the side towards the Israelites would have been bright. It is faith that makes the difference. The pillar of God's Word is bright to faith, but dark and threatening to unbelief; its demands are easy to faith, but difficult to unbelief. This was realized in the passage of the Red Sea. The same way of the Lord was strength to his own people, but destruction to the workers of iniquity. By faith his people passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

So it is with all the principles, doctrines, elements, and craggy passes of God's Word; rugged or smooth, plain or difficult, they are all impassable except to faith. There is no light in them to unbelief, while to the upright there ariseth light in the darkness. The mere intellect may see no light in them, while the heart sees clear light. The intellect may not be able to understand them, except through the heart, to which it often has to come for counsel and interpretation. A believing, loving heart, purified by faith, is the medium of divine knowledge. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant. It is love that brings light; it is faith working by love, and love is as the atmosphere

for light. There would be no light in our world were it not for the atmosphere; and just so it is with the soul. Love is the atmosphere through which light reaches the inmost vision of the soul. God's word must be viewed through the atmosphere of love, or nothing is seen truly and rejoicingly in it. The Word is always shining, and always the same; for as God is light, and in him is no darkness at all, so is his Word; but if the Word shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not, there is no atmosphere of love for it to irradiate, and no vision of faith to see it. He that followeth me, said the Lord Jesus, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. While ye have light, *believe* in the light, that ye may be the *children* of light. Without this faith, working by and through love, receiving the truth in the love of it, we are mere children of sense and of darkness, mere Egyptians; and the Word, instead of being a pillar of fire by night, a flame of holy animating light, is a cloud of thick judgment and terrible darkness. There are nothing but elements of condemnation in it.

Now if it is so with God's Word, it must be the same with God's Providences; for God's Word is but the record of his Providences, and of the principles by which they are unfolded, on which they are founded, and which they are intended to illustrate. There is a bright side to them, and a dark one; not, indeed, in themselves, for with reference to God they are all bright, as revelations of his attributes and parts of his administration. But to the view of different souls, and to the experience of God's creatures as submissive and believing, or unsubmissive and unbelieving, as selfish and dark, or loving and bright, God's Providences are all just like that pillar of cloud and flame. It was only the side towards God's own people that was bright; that is, the side towards faith; but the side towards the Egyptians was darkness; that is, the side towards unbelief. So it ever is, and must be, with all God's dispensations. They have two sides, a bright and a dark side; but

the bright side is bright only to faith, and the dark side is dark only to unbelief. Put faith on the dark side, and it would appear bright; put unbelief on the bright side, and it appears dark. Take the same Providence; suppose it be a severe illness; suppose it be the loss of property; suppose it be the sickness and death of a dear one in the family. It is on all sides, in all respects, in all circumstances, one and the same. Go about it and examine it curiously in every direction, as one might have done with the pillar of cloud, to find what there was in it that shone so strangely in one direction, while it darkened in the other; and you find precisely the same elements, the same materials; precisely the same, and yet to a believing soul, and an unbelieving, it is wholly different.

Set the same pillar down in a household of faith and a household of prayerlessness and unbelief, and while in one case it will be a pillar of bright flame, in the other it will be darkness. It is because of the different position and frame of the soul towards God, not because of any different elements in the providence. In the soul submissive and loving, the providence is seen, received, and read, under the light of that bright star of faith in the promises, All things work for good, and are meant for good to those who love God, and of that other bright star, As many as I love I rebuke and chasten. But in the soul selfish, unsubmissive, and unbelieving, there is no such light, no such interpretation, no such promise before, or rainbow after the storm, but *all* is storm and all darkness.

The believing soul has a key to God's providences in his Word, and there studies them. And it may be said that there is a series of telegraphic signals, by which the Spirit of God in the heart of the believer communicates with God's providences, and knows them afar off as friends, and receives them as ships laden with a freight of blessing; while the unbelieving heart puts the coast in defence against them, and makes them necessarily enemies, by treating them as such. In all things God is love, if men

will leave God to dictate, God to arrange, God to determine, God to execute his sovereign will, as little children leave the care and ordering of all things to a loving Father. But if the child sets up its own will, the creature its short-sightedness and self-preferences, then the love itself must assume the form of rebuke and chastisement, and if the self-will continues, of punishment. Then the pillar of light becomes darkness, and self-will and distrust, continued, shut up the soul in the prison of hell to the blackness of darkness.

God's Word in connexion with his providential dispensations is like a glorious pavilion of transparencies, which you must enter, and study it on the inside, where God has drawn in living colors and wondrous figures the revelations of his mercy to the soul. Standing within the inclosure of his purposes, you see them passing into realities, and the light shining through them, to be used for your enjoyment and growth in grace. Standing without, you see nothing at all but a thick blurr. It is like the view of stained glass in the sides of a great cathedral, wrought with religious figures; you see their light and know their meaning when within the sanctuary; you see nothing while without it. So it is with God's dispensations. Within his word, his sanctuary, his covenant, within the inclosures of his love, the temple of his grace, under the teachings of his Spirit, who takes of the things that are Christ's, and shows them to the soul, his dispensations are as windows filled with high and sacred meaning, through the colors of which God's own light shines in upon the soul. But to one without faith, and outside the word of God, they are all dark and confused, just as outside the walls of the cathedral, the glass is without meaning. We must obey God's directions, and possess God's Spirit, and have faith in God's promises, if we would see God's sights.

Undoubtedly, much depends upon the different states of the mind at different times, even with the Christian;

just as in seeing the objects of nature, much depends upon the state of the atmosphere. It is not a thing belonging to the mountains, but *between* them and the eye, so that whatever darkness there may be in the atmosphere, it can make no alteration in the mountains. And just so, the intervening mists and clouds before the truths in God's Word belong not to those truths, but are between those truths and the mind. The mind may change, and the modes of viewing those truths, the dispositions with which it looks at them, may change, but not the truths themselves.

Because you do not see those truths clearly to-day, it is no proof that you may not see them clearly to-morrow. An interval of prayer may change your whole atmosphere. There may be a change of weather, a breeze from the Paradise of God, a gale of the Holy Spirit, that shall sweep all the clouds from your sky, and you will see what you could not see before, though you knew that it existed. The scenery was not gone, merely because you could not see it. The fact of the mists being there does not throw any doubt over the mountains being there. Neither ought it to have any such influence in divine things, in faith, in the intercourse of the soul with God and eternal realities. You believe, and therefore you *know*. You believe, and therefore speak, *knowing*. We walk by faith, not sight, and are always confident, *knowing*. Knowledge is produced by faith, not sight. It is an error to go by frames and feelings, when we ought to make frames and feelings go by the Word of God. The pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night is not to be guided by the impulses of the people of God, whether to go or stay, but their impulses and movements are to be directed and determined according to the leadings of the cloud and the fire.

The appearance of the Word to our souls depends much upon the habitude of the soul in looking to Christ and setting the daily life after him. In God will I praise his Word; in the Lord will I praise his Word, says David.

In thy light shall we see light. A person whose life is hid with Christ in God sees all things as God sees them, praises God's Word in every part, in every shade, turn, and application of it; sees and rejoices in God's will in his Word, beholds his attributes, bright, lovely, and glorious in all his testimonies, and esteems all his precepts concerning all things to be right. Thy Word is true from the beginning, and every one of thy righteous judgments is true and righteous for ever. All the aspects of God's Word are light and loveliness to such a soul. And all the precious influences of God's Word have their full and blessed effect upon such a soul. It grows in grace, in the symmetry and beauty of grace; every faculty of the soul, every power of the mind, as well as the feelings of the heart, grow in the presence of Christ, beneath his eye, his light, his care.

Walking one summer's day into a forest towards the North, on coming back I was struck with the mosses gathered on the North sides of the trees, while the South and sunny sides were all smooth and bright. It suggested at once a resemblance and a contrast between the growth of spiritual things in man, and mere vegetable life in nature. This latter is a fixture, but the other a voluntary intelligence. But suppose that men kept only a part of their being towards the Sun of Righteousness; and then the consequence would be that all the rest would soon be covered with mosses and dead bark. And so in a Church of Christ you can see life in that portion only which is turned towards the Sun. And so with our affections as individuals; they must be turned towards Christ, and must grow in his light and love; and every part of our thoughtful nature, that is not so turned towards him, speedily grows moss-covered and almost palsied, if not dead and perverted. Our affections must be like the face of the flower, always turning to the Sun, and not like a forest of trees, never seeing the Sun but on one side. Looking unto

Jesus must be the position of the Christian, whatever be the circumstances of his soul.

But here perhaps I am addressing some in the camp of the Egyptians, who are ready to say, O, this is all very well to those who see the Word of God as you Christians see it; but for us on the dark side, of what use is it? What can we do, while the Word of God is to us a sealed book, or nothing but a pillar of salt or of darkness to us? Why, we will tell you. Come over upon our side. Come with us and we will do you good. Change your position. Leave your Egyptian encampment, and come over upon Israel's borders, and trust in Israel's God, and then you will see the Word from the same side that we do, and it will be all bright and glorious. Why is there any dark side at all? The darkness is in you, and not in God's Word. It is because you stand afar off, on your side, not God's, and at a distance. "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these his doings? Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" What can we, or God's Word, or all evidence do for you, or even God himself, so long as you leave not your present position and habitude of heart, but stay in it, putting yourself on the side of God's enemies, the side on which you see nothing in God's Word but a flaming sword, turning every way against you at the Gate of the Paradise of Life?

Indeed, it is the heart of the sinner that must change, or the Word of God can never be otherwise than as that flaming sword. A man will find it life to his soul only in Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Sealed as it may be to you now, there is enough in it, plain as the daylight, which you not only may understand, but which you cannot help understanding, and which condemns you utterly. Come to it in Christ, come applying to him as your teacher, and you will speedily find it both plain and full of interest. You will see and feel its evidence as God's Word. It will speak to you as to the prophets. It will come between you and every evil. It will be not only

a revelation from God, but the revelation *of* God to your soul, and in God's light you will see light. You will take the part of God in all things, and God will take your part. You will esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right, and you will hate every false way. You will be able to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." You will find his Word to be the daily food of your soul; and the difficulties that now perhaps press upon you will be changed into occasions of adoration and of faith. The hard places of Scripture, that seem to you, seen through the atmosphere of guilt, with dreadful faces thronged, and fiery arms, will wear the aspect of glorious guardian angels. All things will put on, towards you, the look and disposition of your soul towards God. If that be a frame of love, all things will come to you as ministers and messengers of love. If your affections go out after God, all things will be full of him, in his Word, and in his Works, and in his Providence, and everything in which you see him will fill you with sacred delight.

And thou, sad sufferer under nameless ill,
That yields not to the touch of human skill,
Improve the kind occasion, understand
A Father's power, and kiss his chastening hand.
To thee the day-spring and the blaze of noon,
The purple evening and resplendent moon,
The stars that, sprinkled o'er the vault of night,
Seem drops descending in a shower of light,
Shine not, or undesired and hated shine,
Seen through the medium of a cloud like thine.
Yet seek Him; in his favor life is found,
All bliss beside, a shadow or a sound.
Then, heaven eclipsed so long, and this dull earth,
Shall seem to start into a second birth;
Nature, assuming a more lovely face,
Borrowing a beauty from the works of grace,
Shall be despised and overlooked no more,
Shall fill thee with delights unfelt before,
Impart to things inanimate a voice,
And bid her mountains and her hills rejoice.

The secret cause of infidelity is perhaps invariably a darkness in the mind produced by wrong affections, by the love of sin in the heart, by such a state of things there, that the soul feels anxious and uneasy in the presence of God, and gloomy beneath the light of his attributes. Nothing but God's Spirit can overcome that. Such a state of things will bring a pillar of cloud and darkness between the soul and God, and will make the soul desire and endeavor to see God in other lights than those in which he shines in the Word of the truth of the gospel. Hence, the beginning, the existence, and the increase of error. If there were a clear, open, frank, trusting, sunny heart towards God, there would be a clear, unmistaken, Scriptural view of God. And hence the pointed condemnation we everywhere meet with in God's Word, against error and infidelity, as being not only the consequence of guilt, but in itself guilt.

All religious error, that involves the soul in a conflict against the God and the piety of the Scriptures, is sinful, and leads to sin. There are indifferent points, in regard to which it may be said, Neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not, are we the worse. And there may be errors in judgment, even with the best intentions; although, if man were not a fallen being, it may be doubted whether there would ever have been any error, even in that. But a loving, humble heart, that comes to God in his Word for light, God will never suffer to go seriously astray. And indeed a loving, humble heart not only has the light of God's Word to go by, but possesses also the Interpreter of God's Word, dwelling in the soul, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but who will guard the soul from error, and lead it into all truth. Without this, the soul's speculations are presumption.

And while she dotes, and dreams that she believes,
She mocks her Maker, and herself deceives;

Her utmost reach, historical assent,
The doctrines warped to what they never meant.
The truth itself is in her head as dull
And useless as a candle in a skull;
And all her love of God a groundless claim,
A trick upon the canvas, painted flame.

So whenever any soul departs from the truth, we shall find the beginning of such departure, in the neglect of that Divine Spirit, and in human prejudice and pride. A man flatters self instead of consulting God, submitting to God, and thence comes a perverted judgment, a crooked sight, a partial, prejudiced view of things; and a very little declination from the truth, *followed on*, will lead the soul fearfully astray, after long following. And then a man dreams that his very errors are marks of originality, independence, and intellectual greatness. Just as if a man with strabismus should fancy that he has a more perfect eye than all his neighbors, because he sees cross-wise, while they see only straight forward.

CHAPTER XIV.

The trials of faith.—Trials of character, and trials to mend character.—Inward and external trials.—Christian sympathy.

It is singularly beautiful to behold the sacred light that shines through periods of sorrow. Some of the simple hymns of Cowper transmit that light as an opal; for they were the childlike record of his own experience, and they have given a household language, as familiar as that of childhood, to some of the dearest processes of the Divine life.

Trials must and will befall;
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all,
This is happiness to me.
Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer,
Trials bring me at his feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there.

Trials are among the most signal way-marks in the Pilgrimage of Faith, trials at the beginning, trials in the continuance, trials at the end. Yet not trials always, nor trials unmingled, but enough constantly, or at intervals, to prove thee and show thee what is in thy heart, and to lead that heart for healing and rest to God.

When comforts are declining
He grants the soul again
A season of clear-shining,
To cheer it after rain.

In holy contemplation,
We sweetly then pursue
The theme of God's salvation,
And find it ever new.

The history of Faith, and of God's discipline for its increase and perfection, ever has been and ever will be a record of trials. Character is read and known in the temper of the soul sustaining them, and they themselves are the costly instruments of God in refining and establishing the soul. We are in the shop of the Great Jeweller, preparing for our places in his palace above; and they whom he means to make the most resplendent, said Leighton in this beautiful figure, he hath oftenest his tools upon. Until this discipline of God have been applied to him, a man knows not of what elements his nature is composed, nor what hidden evils may be festering in his bosom. God must bring them out, and redeem him from them, or he can never be prepared for the kingdom of heaven. A Jeweller may find, in making up a casket, a magnificent stone, in which there seems to be a flaw. If it extends through the stone, it is useless for his purpose, and must be laid aside for some inferior end. Therefore he begins to file it to see how deep it goes, and it may be that after a little of this operation, it will show itself clear; but if not, then it is unfit for the place he had designed it to fill. So it is with God in making up his jewels; there is much filing needed to prepare them for their heavenly setting. Sometimes there are such flaws, that a Christian's usefulness here is well nigh destroyed, even if his hope of happiness hereafter be not ruined. How deep the interest, while the fires of God's discipline are at work upon a man to burn out his dross, or some keen file is applied to remove the evils in his character.

God sometimes sends trials not for general sanctification merely, but to thwart and break up particular schemes which were wrong, but which the Christian was trying to persuade himself he might lawfully accomplish. God may

send a particular trial, on purpose to do this; it may be such a trial as removes away from a man's power some dear thing on which he had relied for the prosecution of his scheme. A man is driving on, and God takes off his chariot wheels, so that he drives heavily; withdraws the linch-pin, as it were, or takes away the main spoke in the wheel of his plan, so that he is compelled to lay it aside. But ordinarily God proceeds more indirectly. He does not speak in a voice from heaven; he is not going to say from the sky, or in a supernatural dream by an angel, You must not go this way or that, or do this or that. He relies upon the common sense of his children for the right interpretation of his providences, and he leaves every man to draw his own inferences; only he says, Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, that are void of understanding, whose mouths must be held in with bit and bridle; that is not the way God takes to guide his children, but deals with them as free moral agents, and sometimes relies greatly upon their tenderness of conscience to see and feel quickly his meaning. "To this man will I look, even to him that is of a lowly and contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my Word."

And doubtless, one of the first things which a child of God who trembleth at his Word, will do in affliction, must be to examine himself, and see what course he has been pursuing, what sin he has been cherishing, what selfish scheme indulging, or what idol he has set up in his heart, and to suspect that *that* is the thing that God means. But a man may easily deceive himself if he will; he may deal violently with his conscience, and shut his eye against the lessons God is teaching him, even in the midst of affliction; and if he does this, he will come out of his affliction a more selfish man than before, and with a radical injury done to his character, instead of a benefit. The flaw in that stone holds on, after all its cutting and filing; nay, it has become more conspicuous, and if God does not have to throw it away, he will be able at most to use it merely

to fill up a chink in some obscure place, instead of putting it where it would have shone brightly to his glory.

It is a very precious thing, a very heavenly attainment, to have a quick and keen perception of God's meaning in his discipline, a tender and holy consciousness of its purport, and a sweet readiness to understand and obey its intimations, without forcing God to use greater violence. There is a childlike simplicity in the soul of a man walking closely with God, that finds out his meaning, even when others do not see how he is indicating it; just as a little child, when it is doing wrong in company, will understand even a gesture of its mother, and not wait to be spoken to. It is tempting God, when a man hardens himself in his adversity. And for a child of God to wait to be spoken to more plainly, when the finger of God's warning providence is lifted in affliction, argues an obstinacy of temper, which God must conquer, or that child will be lost. If God's covenant love is set upon him, God will make him learn obedience by the things which he suffers, or, if he does persevere in his own way, God will put such ingredients into his fancied cup of happiness, as shall turn it into wormwood.

Temptations or trials, the endurance of which an apostle tells us is blessed, may be of two kinds, inward and external, and without them a man may know nothing of himself, but the hidden evils of his heart may be completely concealed from him. God varies this discipline according as he sees the state of his people and the accomplishment of his object in the perfecting of their character, requires. Inward trials are the hardest to bear, and external trials indeed are light things, if a man's inward state be holy and happy, if he have the clear shining of the Saviour's countenance, and a sense of the approbation of his God. And there are so many and such precious promises made to those who are in affliction; afflictions, rightly received, are so clearly represented as a proof of sonship, and if endured for Christ's sake, are so

evidently considered as the greatest of blessings; that when the heart is in the enjoyment and exercise of God's love it is very easy to endure. But when the inward state is wrong, when the soul has departed from God and grace is declining, then external trials are terrible. The mind is not at all prepared for them, they rouse up a sense of sin, and fill the soul with the anguish of conviction, and such a man feels, in his departure from God, when overtaken by such evils, as if he had no friend or reliance either for this world or the next.

External trials in such a case are oftentimes the only means of salvation, the means of awakening, of conviction and repentance. We love our own ease, and in an easy state, if God lets it continue, we may worship our own idols without being aware of it. On the other hand, to a soul that is following hard after God, living near to him, external trials are a great help to its advancement, a great assistance to its graces. External trials in such a case are sometimes as the very windows of heaven to the soul; the light and blessedness of the celestial world come down through them. And they call grace into exercise, and strengthen it; they work patience, faith, submission, and all the graces that are to be learned in no other school but that of affliction. They are a great means of power in prayer.

Inward trials are of very various kinds, and they sometimes come even in answer to prayer. Sometimes God leaves his dearest children to such a perception and experience of the devices of Satan, the temptations of his malice, and the dreadful evils of the heart, that they are well nigh overwhelmed and in despair. We have referred already to some instances of such experience as this, recorded abundantly in the Psalms. And the fruits of such trials are blessed. Blessed is the man that endureth such temptation; we mean, endureth it by fleeing to Christ with it. It is in such trials that the loftiest and most spiritual exercise of faith is called for; and it is

out of such trials that there arises a rich, deep, and lasting experience, with strong and blessed points of Christian character. Such trials are good even in the commencement of one's Christian course, better then perhaps than ever, for so they early teach the preciousness of Christ and the habit of profound reliance on him, as nothing else can. Therefore let no one be discouraged in passing through such trials. Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God. It is comparatively at an early stage of his progress that Bunyan has put that terrific conflict of Christian with Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation, and the scene of his difficulties in the Valley of the Shadow of Death lies near at hand. With this delineation agrees that admirable hymn of Newton:

I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of his salvation know,
And seek more earnestly his face.

'Twas he who taught me thus to pray,
And he, I trust, has answered prayer;
But it has been in such a way,
As almost drove me to despair.

Sometimes a man is called to endure temptation in a succession of little things, that are more difficult to be borne than great things. It is the rarest of all grace, which is carried into daily, hourly exercise in the common-place business and intercourse of life; we are so disposed to put off the exercise of grace to great occasions, and to let nature and not grace have its perfect work on all common ones. But it is a most wise remark of one of the Apocryphal books, He that despiseth little things, by little and little shall he fall. Our piety will be destroyed

by small temptations, if we do not call it into exercise on small occasions. Let this be remembered in the common walks of life. Let it be remembered in the daily occupations of the household, and in all our intercourse one with another.

Christian communion and sympathy is of great value and comfort to a tempted soul. It is especially in spiritual things that as iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. But there are cases in which a man hardly dares believe that ever any other person experienced such assaults and evils as his own soul has to pass through. There are cases in which he is very unwilling to repose confidence in any human being, and can go to none but God. And sometimes the more exclusively he is shut up to God, the better.

There is an affecting and instructive delineation in the picture drawn by Bunyan of Christian in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. When Christian had travelled in this disconsolate condition some considerable time, he thought he heard the voice of a man going before him, saying, Though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death I will fear no ill, for thou art with me. Then was he glad, and that for these reasons. First, because he gathered from thence that some who feared God were in this valley as well as himself. Secondly, for that he perceived God was with them, though in that dark and dismal state; and why not, thought he, with me; though by reason of the impediment that attends this place I cannot perceive it. Thirdly, for that he hoped, could he overtake them, to have company by and by. So he went on, and called to him that was before; but he knew not what to answer for that he also thought himself to be alone. And by and by the day broke. Then said Christian, "He hath turned the shadow of death into the morning." And thus is God able at any time to turn the shadow of death into the morning. When he giveth peace, who then can make trouble? But until he be pleased to give peace, the soul

must trust submissively to him, even in the darkness. Because there seems to be no light, but only darkness, that may not be any positive proof that God is not with the soul. The soul may not be able to perceive it, by reason, as Bunyan expresses it, of the impediment that attends the place; and yet God may be guiding and blessing the soul, even in such thick darkness. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, said David in such a case, then THOU knewest my path.

God of my life, to thee I call,
Afflicted at thy feet I fall,
When the great water-floods prevail,
Leave not my trembling heart to fail.
Friend of the friendless and the faint!
Where should I lodge my deep complaint?
Where but with thee, whose open door
Invites the helpless and the poor!

Did ever mourner plead with thee
And thou refuse that mourner's plea?
Does not the word still fixed remain
That none shall seek thy face in vain?
That were a grief I could not bear,
Didst thou not hear and answer prayer;
But a prayer-hearing, answering God
Supports me under every load.

Fair is the lot that's cast for me;
I have an advocate with thee;
They whom the world caresses most
Have no such privilege to boast.
Poor though I am, despised, forgot,
Yet God, my God, forgets me not,
And he is safe, and must succeed,
For whom the Lord vouchsafes to plead

CHAPTER XV.

Faith still put to the test.—Is it faith in sight, or faith in God?—Three days in the wilderness.—Light out of darkness, strength out of weakness.—The discovery of God in self-disappointment and abasement.

It is a great thing to learn to trust God. And a man does not learn it, ordinarily, till he passes through affliction, and oftentimes he has to experience much affliction in order to learn. He has to be stripped of his self-reliance, and the props and crutches, on which he has supported himself and his virtues, have to be taken away, together with the dear things in which he trusted for comfort and happiness; and then it is to be seen whether his soul relies on God. A man may have the *principle* of reliance, but *habits* of reliance are not to be formed at once; and so a man may have the principle of submission, but the habit of submission, the grace of resignation, is a thing of time and discipline and gradual formation. It is easy to trust God in prosperity, and a man may think he has formed the *habit* of trusting him; but let him be overwhelmed with adversity, and then how often does he find his piety deserting him, and that he has yet to learn this simple lesson of dependence on God.

We have said that inward trials are sometimes better at the very commencement of one's Christian course than ever, more experience being gained from them then, than ever afterwards. Yet it is not till the lapse of some time, ordinarily, that the soul learns to read and understand

such trials aright. And always the soul is a learner, as a little child, and even old lessons are new ones.

O let me then at length be taught
What I am still so slow to learn,
That God is Love, and changes not
Nor knows the shadow of a turn.

Sweet truth, and easy to repeat!
But when my faith is sharply tried,
I find myself a learner yet,
Unskilful, weak, and apt to slide.

We find it recorded immediately after the Exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt, that they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. It was a sharp and sudden teaching of their dependence on God. Three days in the wilderness and no water! A multitude of some hundreds of thousands of people must have suffered much under these circumstances. To realize their suffering, to have an adequate idea of it, we should need to be put in their situation, beneath a burning sun, a cloudless sky, surrounded by the bare, dry, grey, shining desert. Three days and no water! This seemed indeed a deplorable commencement of their journey. They thought, when God had brought them safely through the Red Sea, that that was the way in which he would cause them to triumph continually. They knew very little of themselves, still less of God. They knew very little of God's methods of discipline, very little of their own need of that discipline. They could sing God's praises, on occasion of a great deliverance, provided Moses would prepare an ode for them; just as the most careless and irreligious of men might pray to God with the voice, if a form of prayer were prepared and printed for them, without the least degree or beginning of the Spirit of prayer in their hearts. But their obligations to God and their dependence upon him they had scarcely begun to realize. All the discipline of faith they were yet

to experience. They were just entering on a school, the lessons of which were to be of forty years' duration. Probably they thought, when the Red Sea was between them and their enemies, and they had beheld Pharaoh and his host (for dread of whom they had stood shivering) all whelmed in the returning billows, that now there was no more for them to do, but just to march straight, without hindrance or difficulty, into the promised land of freedom and of plenty. Little did they know how little they were prepared for it. Little did they know what there was in their own hearts.

And therefore, after the first triumph, after God had brought them safely out of Egypt, and across the Red Sea, their first experience was trial and disappointment. The course which they thought was to be one of constant advancement and victory, they speedily found to be one of self-mortification and delay. They plunged at once into the wilderness; not a wilderness in our sense of the term, which to them would have been comparative security and repose; not a region of wild woods and thick pathless shades of the undisturbed primeval forest; but an open, uninhabitable, barren, parched desert, which to most of them, who had scarcely ever stirred from the green banks of the Nile in Goshen, must have been a strange and gloomy experience. Such is the first disclosure of self to a soul escaping from its native city of destruction. Such is sometimes the early unexpected experience of the converted soul setting out on its pilgrimage to heaven. Such, too, is sometimes the experience of old saints in new Christian enterprises.

And they wandered on three days through this desert, and found no water. They began to forget and almost to doubt their experience of God's mercy at the Red Sea, though as yet they did not go so far in their murmurings as to accuse Moses of having brought them into the wilderness to perish with hunger. But now they are coming to a green spot, and certainly there will be water.

They press on eagerly; the report runs through the whole host to the furthest outskirt of the multitude. Water! water! Green trees and living water! The foremost press to the fountain; but what a fearful disappointment! The water is so bitter that it cannot be used; nay, perhaps it is poisonous. And now the people begin to despair and murmur, for if they have not water they must die. And now again God interposes, as when he opened for them the Red Sea. He heals this bitter fountain in the desert, and makes it sweet for the thirsty multitude. This is God's doing, and thus by mingled trial and mercy they are to be taught their dependence upon God. Their trials shall prepare them for their blessings, and their blessings shall prepare them for their trials, and in all things they shall know God.

Three days in the wilderness and no water constitutes one form of the trials of faith. It may be construed temporally or spiritually; but be it the deprivation of expected and needed blessings either way, it is hard to bear. Be it water for the parched tongue, or water for the thirsty soul, it is terrible to be without it. But despair is much worse. Famine may cut the soul off from God's present mercies, but despair cuts the soul off from God. Bunyan's account of Hopeful's conversion is instructive. Did you do as you were bidden, said Christian, when Faithful taught you to pray? Yes, over, and over, and over. And did the Father reveal the Son to you? Not at the first, nor second, nor third, nor fourth, nor fifth, no, nor at the sixth time neither. What did you do then? What! why, I could not tell what to do. Had you not thoughts of leaving off praying? Yes, and a hundred times twice told. And what was the reason you did not? I believed that that was true which had been told me, to wit, that without the righteousness of this Christ, all the world could not save me; and therefore thought I with myself, if I leave off I die, and I can but die at the throne of grace. And withal this came into my mind, If it tarry,

wait for it, because it will surely come and will not tarry. So I continued praying, until the Father showed me his Son.

Here for Hopeful were the three days in the wilderness and no water. Just thus it is with many, who start fair from Egypt, thinking to accomplish all good things speedily; then comes the check, the first trial of faith, when many turn back, like Pliable, at the first difficult and painful experience. But if present disappointment be *painful*, unbelief, despair, and the turning back of the soul, are *perdition*. Perseverance in faith loses no present blessing, but gains an eternal crown.

Bitterness in the fountain to which we run for refreshment constitutes another form of the trials of faith on our pilgrimage. This perhaps is worse than the first. It would be hard to choose, but bitter, poisonous water is certainly worse than none at all. You come to a watercourse, and find it a deceitful brook, gone to nothing, perished. The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them. They were confounded because they had hoped; they came thither and were ashamed. Such were Job's friends, and such was Job's disappointment. So the reeds on which we lean often break and pierce us. The fair apples we desire to taste prove ashes. The distant waters we thought we beheld, while travelling in the desert, are only a delusive mirage, a reflection of the sky in the sands at the horizon. It is a great trial when this is the case, even with friends and earthly blessings merely. Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth and a foot out of joint. But it is a far greater anguish to the soul, when expected spiritual refreshments turn out to be naught, when you come to a spiritual fountain, and find nothing but bitterness. Sometimes there is such a disappointment to the soul at the very table of the Lord, sometimes in the exercise of prayer, sometimes in the Word of God, sometimes in the service of God's sanctuary. Instead of going from

strength to strength, the soul seems passing from weakness to weakness. Mine eyes fail for thy Word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me? All the wells that are digged, the Philistines fill them with earth, and when the soul thinks it has found another well of springing water by digging, there is such a strife for it or about it, and such uncertainty in the possession, that its name becomes Esek and Sitnah, contention and hatred. This assuredly is a great trial of faith.

But all such forms of trial are necessary. They are a part of our discipline at the hand of God, and however severe they may seem, they are a merciful discipline. In the course of every great enterprise for God there must be difficulties. God himself will interpose with them, if man does not; for without difficulties, great enterprises would be without permanence and depth. Difficulties are as the ballast to keep the ship in trim. They are the cold days that set the vegetation, when uninterrupted sunshine and heat would bring it preternaturally forward. The work of setting out for heaven, and of finding God, is a great enterprise. The work of building a church for God is both temporally and spiritually a great enterprise. The work of establishing and sustaining a Christian mission is a great enterprise. In all such undertakings, personally and unitedly, we must expect difficulties; and if they do not come at one stage, they will at another. Sometimes they come at the very outset. There is a Red Sea to be crossed; and if God helped us over that sea, so that, although it was very terrible to look at and anticipate, yet it proved nothing in the crossing, then come immediately afterwards three days in the wilderness, and no water. Here is perhaps the first severe lesson of faith.

We expected the wilderness, for we saw that it lay right in the way of our duty. But we expected water also. We thought of course God would secure to us *that* provision. We were ready to press on in the journey, though it *were* a wilderness, a desert; but we never dreamed that

God would refuse us water, that he would leave us without *that*. We expected encouragement and refreshment by the way. Instead of that, we are perhaps plunged at once into suffering. We expected sight, and God begins at once to teach us the great lesson of faith. It is very easy, even for the carnal mind, to live half by faith and half by sight. It is easy to go on for God, when God goes on before us and for us, opening the Red Sea by a miracle as fast as we come up to it, and making water-springs to gush out whenever and wherever we feel thirsty; but when God withdraws his visible support, and seems to leave us to ourselves, when he is pleased, indeed, really to leave us to ourselves, to find out our own weakness, then we begin to discover that it is not so easy living by faith as by sight; we begin to discover how little true faith we possess; we are even inclined to stop in our journey, and not go a step by faith, till we have sight for faith to walk by. The ability to walk in simple reliance on God alone, and his promise, is a great ability; it is not the earliest thing, by any means, but contrariwise, a very advanced and tried grace in Christian experience.

Yet we talk much of walking by faith, not sight; we propose it as the very simplest thing in the Christian life; we put it forth as a spiritual truism. There are different kinds of sight, and we may be just walking by one kind, when we think we are walking by faith; because another kind, the kind to which we have been accustomed, is not with us. There is a spiritual sight, as well as a spiritual faith; a sight and experience of God's comforts, as well as a faith in God's promises. Now it is easy to walk when God's comforts surround the soul, when the soul mounts up as on eagles' wings, when God, as it were, takes the soul by the hand, and hurries it forward as the angels took Lot, and hurried him out of Sodom to Zoar. When "the candle of the Lord" shines bright upon us, when he fills our hearts with his love, and shows us the glory, certainty, and blissfulness of his covenant, this is sight rather than

faith, this is experience and enjoyment; it is the "earnest of the Spirit." It is easy to believe God, when we thus see and feel the presence of God, when he sends forth the Spirit of his dear Son into our hearts, and makes us cry, Abba, Father. But when those sensible comforts are withheld or withdrawn, *then* to rely upon God's promises, and go forward in duty just as if we experienced them, that is true faith, great faith, unmingled faith.

And that is the faith taught by trial. Blessings will teach gratitude, but not this kind of faith. Blessings, indeed, are so apt to accustom the soul to sight, that except by the very peculiar care and discipline of God's grace, a long uninterrupted continuance of them unfits the soul for faith; so that when the accustomed tide of blessings begins to fail, and a discipline of want or darkness intervenes, the soul begins to imagine itself deserted of God, begins to faint, forgetful of the exhortation which speaketh as unto children concerning the rebukes of God; perhaps stops short in the course of duty, just as if God's comforts and not God, were its guide, its support, its index, and its impulse.

But that is faith in sight, not faith in God. Faith in God must be taught, as well as rejoicing and gratitude in God's comforts. The soul must be taught to toil on in the wilderness, without repining, water or no water, confident in God. For this purpose, to teach this habit of faith, the three days in the wilderness without water may be needed at the very outset; and it may be necessary for God to repeat them, cutting off the soul from every earthly and sensible stay, and even from every sensible spiritual stay, and throwing it entirely and only upon God and his promises. This is the faith, of which the example is so beautiful in Habakkuk. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy

in the God of my salvation." This is faith in God, and not merely in God's blessings; it is faith and joy in God, irrespective of his blessings.

This is the faith inculcated in Isaiah: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Yes! when he can see and feel nothing of good, then let him trust in the name and attributes of goodness, even in the name of the Lord, which is pledged for his deliverance; so doing, he trusts in the reality of goodness, and is stayed upon his God. Let Jehovah, though invisible, let God in Christ, though now hidden for a season, yet the God of mercy, of redemption, of salvation to sinners, be the stay and support of the soul. But let it not run, in the midst of spiritual darkness, to sensible supports, or to the guidance and comfort of lights and fires manufactured for that purpose, and not of God. Let it not run to self-gratification, or to men's promises or flatteries, or to anything out of God's Word. For God hath said, by the side of the same command for the soul to be stayed upon himself, Behold, all ye that kindle a fire (in such a time of darkness), and compass yourselves about with sparks (your own poor, miserable fire-works); walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled; but to do that is your delusion and destruction; it may be rejoicing in self for a little time, but the end is death; for this shall ye have at my hands; ye shall lie down in sorrow.

Sorrow indeed it is to be left of God, left to self, sinful, miserable self! But this trust in the simple name of God as revealed in his Word is faith, genuine faith, acceptable faith. It is faith in God, not merely in God's comforts. It will be seen at once that this comprises submission, a disposition sweetly resigned to God's will. If He leave but himself, the afflicted, sorrowing soul says, he may take what he will away. And he cannot take away himself. His Word forbids that. He has never promised in his

Word any particular comforts, at the particular times of my will; but he *has* promised *himself* to all who put their trust in him; and come what may, my soul resteth upon God. My soul, rest thou *only* upon God, for my expectation and my hope are from him!

Now this is a thing that we learn only from experience; for ordinarily we set out with very different expectations. We know the *theory* of faith, and we *speculate* well, and mean to act accordingly; but when trial and difficulty come, we are very much surprised at it. "*By and by they are offended.*" Particular navigation on the seas of life by God's Word is a very different thing from the study of spiritual trigonometry and quadrants at school. When overtaken by a storm, instead of saying, Now is the time foretold, when God would exercise my faith, now is the time to prove my trust to be in him, and not in calm weather, we say, How shall I get rid of this trial? How clear up this storm, or fly from it? We think too much of present quietude and peace, look too much after it, and regret its loss too bitterly. Like Jonah, we are apt to be exceedingly glad of the gourd when it comes, and exceedingly angry when it is taken away.

But God does never too long continue his trying discipline; it is not all work and no play, but simply toil and trial for the purpose of teaching faith, and when that is somewhat accomplished, God's wisdom and love are glad to bestow blessings. He healed the fountain of Marah in the desert, when his people could not drink of it until he had poured his blessing upon the waters. It was infinitely better to have bitter water with God's healing, than the best of water without God. The very trials and disappointments of a Christian, *if God comes with them*, are better than all the blessings of the worldling. It was better to have the *disappointment* at first, and *God's interposition* afterwards, than to have found a sweet fountain at once. And then, at the next move, they were brought of God to a most

refreshing and desirable station, where were twelve wells of water, and three-score and ten palm trees.

Their bitter disappointment at first, and God's merciful interposition, had begun to teach them that everything of good must come from God. They were beginning to learn this great lesson of faith; and now these twelve wells and seventy palm trees were from him also; and his previous discipline with them made them feel this. And if they should again forget this dependence, God would again have to bring them to their senses by severe trial. It is one of the lessons of faith the most seldom or at least perhaps the latest learned, and also it is one of the greatest proofs of faith, to receive our daily mercies as from God. This is the life of faith amidst sense. What *are* our daily mercies, but daily miracles, daily and remarkable interpositions of God's mercy, preventing the ordinary course of nature? We need to see and to feel this. The ordinary course, seeing that we are sinners, would be for God's wrath to descend upon us, and all our mercies to be taken away. It is quite out of the course of nature for us, a rebellious race, to receive mercies, and it is only by God's interposition in Christ that we do receive them; a greater miracle by far, than when God interposed to heal the fountain in the desert. Justice to the full would be the course of nature, but the supernatural cross intervenes, and miracles of mercy are wrought for us. Our life is a perpetual miracle. It is a proof of faith to feel this, and it is a blessed life of faith to live thus upon God.

But the things we are familiar with seem things of course; we lose the sense of novelty, and when that is gone, of God's interposition. While that sense of novelty lasts, blessings may seem something miraculous. And if we could carry into life only a child's sense of the marvellous, we should have more faith, we should see God more clearly. But we lose the sense of freshness in God's mercies, and then the sense of God. Just so it was with

the Hebrews. Forty years, every morning, they found the ground covered with manna for their food. They almost ceased to think of it as a miracle. And indeed our experience of God's mercy in every way is almost as miraculous as theirs of God's daily manna. But after a while it becomes so familiar, that we almost cease to remember God in it. Yet we ought to live upon God, and not by bread alone; we ought to see God in all our mercies. They are given to lead us to God, given as links of intercourse with him, given as a discipline, leading to something better.

The purpose of these mercies, especially our spiritual mercies, is not so much present enjoyment, as strength to go on. God's *love*, in this world, is a *discipline*. The Mount of Transfiguration, if we are admitted to it, is not a place to stay in, but to be refreshed in, for the trials and duties of our pilgrimage. There may be an encampment, but that is all. We must strike our tents, and go on. Our Blessed Lord said, as he was about to be betrayed into the hands of sinners, and just as he was establishing the sacred sacramental institution as a gift of remembrance, of refreshment, of strength, of spiritual life, for his church in all ages, With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer. May we not suppose that with this desire of such solemn and sweet communion with those whom Christ so tenderly loved, there was mingled the feeling that that sacred season and ordinance itself celebrated at that hour, would prove, even for him, a preparation and support for the great conflict and agony even unto death, on which he was now to enter for their sakes!

CHAPTER XVI.

Faith an in-working law, with the obedience voluntary; not a despotism, with the obedience compulsory or irresistible.—God working in man both to will and to do.—Deceitfulness and danger of the idea of perfection attained.

THE only true theory of our mental philosophy is that which represents the will as co-present, and co-active in all the movements of the understanding and the affections. There can be no separation; otherwise, the mind is insane. Our whole character, our whole habit, style, and continued activity of being, are voluntary; nor is this voluntariness in the least intermitted or suspended by the operations of Divine Grace, no more than the current of a river is intermitted, when its channel, and perhaps its properties, are entirely changed. It may have flowed muddy, and now flows clear; it may have flowed North, towards the pole, and now flows South, towards the tropics; but the current and its law of activity are the same. And so it is with the everlasting, indestructible activity of our personal free will. It is never so active as when God acts in it, and is the fountain of its power.

So Paul says, in Colossians i. 29, in allusion to the advancement of the work of God's grace in men's souls, "Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." There is in this passage, taken in connexion with two other grand illustrious passages from Paul's Epistles, a remarkable epitome of the way of God's grace with man's will, God's sovereignty with man's free agency, God's Omnipotence with man's

co-operation. Paul has, more distinctly than any other sacred writer, brought these two things together, shown the point where these two seas meet and become one; and he has illustrated the same in his own experience. In Philippians ii. 12, 13, he states the theory of Divine Grace under the form of a command. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." In 1st Corinthians xv. 10, he gives a striking commentary upon, and illustration of, this theory, from his own experience, "By the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Colossians i. 29, the verse before referred to, presents the same idea in a somewhat different form. Add to these passages the exhortation in 2d Corinthians vi. 1, "We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain;" and we have a very clear and comprehensive view of God's great method in the work of grace; a method infinitely wise and condescending, not only of regenerating, but of sanctifying, educating grace; not only of imparting good dispositions, but of training the soul into them, and in them, as voluntary habits.

God's way of blessing the soul is in making it holy. But holiness is not a made thing, but a voluntary life, and an active experience; a gradual, growing life, and an experience from less to greater. This life and experience are all from God, and the regenerated and sanctified soul is his creation. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new; and all things are of God." Yet all things are not of God in such an exclusive sense that some of them are not also of man; not of man apart from God, but of God in man, and of man co-operating with God, by God's own Spirit dwelling and working in man. Holiness is a habit, wrought by the Spirit of God, but voluntary in

man, at every step and degree in its progress. It cannot be *merely* God's gift, but it must be also the soul's own life; the life of God in the soul of man, but still the soul's own life, and not another's. And yet, in another view, it not only can be, but is, merely the gift of God, having no other possible origin, source, or sustaining power but God's; and yet it is not God's gift as an endowment handed to the soul out of heaven, but as a life, quickened and wakened within the soul, by the indwelling of God's Spirit, a law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; a law, not a despotism; a principle of freedom, not a bondage.

Hence results the gradual method of God's grace, for he will proceed no further than the voluntary habit and co-operating energy of the soul proceed with him. Hence the fact that our own expectations are often disappointed and astounded in observing and experiencing the discipline of God with our own souls. Perhaps we pray earnestly for grace, and are astonished that our prayers are not answered, when we find, afterwards, that God was really answering them, by drawing us on to more prayer, and exciting within us those mighty desires, which, in some respects in our own view, the stronger they grow, the less they seem to be answered, for the more the soul sees the boundlessness of the heights and depths of glory before it, and the greatness of its own deficiencies. Indeed, the more the soul longs to know what is the length, and depth, and breadth, and height, of the love of Christ, the more it finds that that love passeth knowledge; so that, though it seems as if prayer were unanswered directly, yet by the very discipline of the heart in prayer, by the very urgency and vastness of its desires, it is being filled, or preparing to be filled, with all the fulness of God. Holiness is becoming the soul's habit, through the very desire after holiness; desires and attempts being nearly all we can have in this life, which is a life of active labor *after* God, and *for* God, not of rest in the possession *of* God. I shall be satisfied *when I awake,* with thy likeness; and I must be satisfied

now with being enabled and drawn on by grace to labor after it. There is thus a ceaseless spiritual exercise within the soul, a life developed, a passing of theoretical truth into practical experience, a formation of the soul's habit of working, while God is working *in* the soul, both to will and to do.

I thought, says the soul, in my romantic dreams of heaven without toil and suffering, without the need of purifying fires endured, that my path was to be all the way through the land Beulah. I never dreamed of the crucible, nor of the mortifying discoveries of dross, instead of Christ —dross which must rise to the surface before it could be removed, and which, in so rising to be removed, might conceal Christ from the soul, even while it was the virtue of Christ's grace in the soul that was separating the dross from it. To me it seemed *all* dross, when I was expecting solid gold and silver. I thought my Lord would new-create me at once into a jewel, without the fires and files and cutting instruments of such sharp discipline.

> I thought that in some favored hour
> At once he'd answer my request,
> And by his love's constraining power
> Subdue my sins and give me rest.

But how *can* all this be done? God must make the soul itself the instrument in all this, if he would have the holiness of the soul to be a habit, and not an exotic, set as it were in a hot-house. The natural soil, in the air and climate of this world, must produce the plant, which God sows, which God causes to spring up, which God waters, if the plant would live and thrive. Or, if it is too much to say that the natural soil must produce it, we must say at least that it must be produced by grace *in* the natural soil, and in spite of it, and it must be able to grow under all varieties of air and climate, or it will never be fit to be transplanted to heaven. The grace which is not good for *conflict* here, will not be fit for *rest* hereafter.

God works in us to will and to do; a complete, thorough, continuing habit and life, begun from within. The clock must be one that *goes* by inward machinery; not the mere face of a clock, by which the master must stand himself, and turn the hands, according to his own time, that they may seem right. They must go themselves, by the working of the main-spring. So the renewed creature's holiness must be a clock that *goes*, a holiness that *lives* from Christ living in it, a *life* and not an imitation, a growth from within, and not a mere index from abroad; it must be a labor, as Paul says, according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

There is, therefore, a great deal of hard work, which the soul must encounter and endure in the process of growth in grace, under the discipline of God in answer to prayer, and in becoming holy. There is a great deal of hard work, as we have said, which the soul prays for, when it asks the Lord that it may grow in faith and love and every grace. Possibly the soul is even praying for great trials. The Hebrews cried to God for deliverance from their bondage; they were really asking for all the perils and trials of the wilderness. God knows the end from the beginning; we do not. He knows every step of the way beforehand; we do not. He says, Rise up and walk, and you shall come to a bright palace, and sweet gardens, and running streams. We rise up and walk, and lo! we come to what seems a boundless desert, and we see as yet, nothing of the palace, nor the sweet gardens, nor the flowing waters, and our souls are much discouraged because of the way, and we faint for thirst, and are ready to die in the wilderness; and still God says, Walk on, and you shall come to the palace.

Now we might have known at first, had we known anything of our own hearts, that we should get into the desert, that the desert lay between us and the sweet gardens, and the palace, and the living fountains. But God does not say, Rise up and walk, and you shall come to a great desert;

for if he did, we should never set out; but he says, Come to the sweet rest! And when, in obedience and faith and hope, we have risen up and lost ourselves in the desert, then he lets us know that it was necessary, before we *could* come to the place of our rest, that he should lead us through the wilderness, to prove us and show us all that was in our hearts, and that, without such disciplinary wanderings and discoveries, we never *could* come to the palace, nor be fitted to go in at its gates.

There is, we say again, at the end of this prayer, which the soul of the Pilgrim sends forth for grace, for God to work his work in the soul with divine power and glory, a great, and often intense conflict and labor. There is the Hill Difficulty, over which that prayer is sure to lead us, in climbing which, the soul seems sometimes as if it would fall and die from very weakness and weariness. Bunyan's Christian, in going up that hill, set out almost with running, so full was he of zeal and hope, of animation and impulse. But he soon got to walking, and thence fell to climbing upon his hands and knees, and that with such weariness, that it seemed as if he could not go on. Now here is imaged a period of discipline, which every soul sooner or later encounters, in which perhaps the very simplest duties of the Christian pilgrimage are irksome; when the soul cleaveth unto the dust and melteth for heaviness, or is become like a bottle in the smoke, and begins to think that it never knew what were the very beginnings of divine life; when even prayer is a fatigue, so that to take step after step is like climbing a savage, inaccessible mountain, or like travelling on one's hands and knees up the pyramids.

And what now shall the soul do? Will it give up for weariness and weakness, and say I can go no further? Is it not the very trial of one's growth in grace now, to go directly to God with this weariness, and cast the burden on him, and even while disinclined to prayer, to pray the more earnestly for God's assistance? It was as bright

a proof as could be given of David's growth in grace, when, though compelled to cry out, My soul melteth for heaviness, we find him at the throne of grace pleading for the divine mercy. His importunity in such a case is a greater proof of grace, than his heaviness is of the absence of grace. Ah yes! the very trial of grace, and the process of *growth* in grace now in such a case, is, not to have bright hope and joy and peace in believing, but to climb on, even in faintness and gloom, to keep climbing, though ready to die, faint yet pursuing; and, that trial successfully and faithfully gone through, the growth in grace is far greater, than if an equal period of time had been spent in a sunshiny quiet sweet walk beside still waters in the green pastures of salvation. Do you think, O David, that you are any better in the 23d Psalm than you are in the 88th? Any better when you can say, He leadeth me in green pastures, than when you have to say, While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted? Are you really growing in grace faster in the green pastures than under the terrors? Why, on the contrary, you will find that the change here is of God's discipline, not of your goodness, and that the submissive endurance of God's terrors requires much more of faith and patience, and indeed almost every grace, than a walk in green pastures.

And do you think, O man of God, who art rejoicing in the light of his countenance, and walking and leaping and praising God, that you are any better Christian, with your light and peace and joy, or any more growing Christian, than the poor, dejected, weary, weeping traveller beside you, who is ready to sit down and die with a broken heart in the midst of the Hill Difficulty? Aye, you are very apt to think so. And he that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease. But very much mistaken you are indeed. And the world is very apt to think so; but all is not gold that glitters; neither, because the mineral beside you seems just now almost all earth, is it certain but that one of the

most costly of heaven's jewels is coming out of it, when God has worked upon it a while longer.

And do you think, poor, faint-hearted, discouraged pilgrim, because you are bowed down now, and step after step in your pilgrimage is not only without comfort, joy, peace, but even with great weariness, weakness, and irksomeness, that therefore God has deserted you, that he has not heard your prayer, that you will never reach heaven, never have either the possession or the evidences of grace? Aye, we are very apt to think so, and to seek for comfort rather than patience; but still, your present stage in the pilgrimage may be further on towards the perfect day of heaven, than that of him who is just now running like an arrow. At any rate, if you hold on your way, and still labor, step after step, crag after crag, in this difficult passage, God is causing you to grow in grace, and preparing you for a comfort and peace that shall not be transitory, but abiding for ever. For the Lord will not cast off for ever, but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies. When a man is bearing the yoke of his God upon him, he sitteth alone and keepeth silence, or perhaps he saith, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord. But it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

This view of the Christian life is one that should prevent discouragement, and excite to great perseverance, even though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations. If so, it is only that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. This *need be* is exceedingly precious and encouraging; this is the way God must take with you; it is a *need be* on your account, not on his; a need be by reason of your weakness and of his great goodness; and if you persevere waiting upon him, your *heaviness*, under

such circumstances, is quite as good a seal and proof of your sonship, of your belonging to God, as another person's rapturous enjoyment under different circumstances. Only be anxious to please Christ; only wait on him. And remember that when you prayed that God would make you holy, you did really pray that he would take whatever means might be necessary for the accomplishment of this prayer. When you send for a physician, you expect that he will put you on some course of treatment; and the course may be longer or shorter, easier or more difficult, according to the nature of your case; but you do not give up in despair, or conclude that he does not know your case, or does not design your restoration, because the medicine you take to-day does not restore you to health to-morrow. Perhaps even a long voyage, and a journey among the mountains, may be necessary for you.

And let it be remembered that God has particular forms of discipline requisite for the production of particular forms of faith in the soul. And indeed he varies it very much according to the different stations he intends his children to occupy, and the work he has for them to perform. As in this world the education of one son in the household for a farmer, another for a merchant, another for a teacher, and another for a lawyer, will in some respects be very different; so it is with God's dealings with his people; no doubt they are varied, according to the work which he means to accomplish by them, and the place in his kingdom which he will have them occupy. One stone is to be set in this place, another in that; and they must be shaped and cut and polished according to their intended setting.

It may seem gloomy and forbidding to say that the Christian, in praying for growth in grace, prays for much hard work in the pilgrimage, not comfort, and perhaps for no little trial. But who, in his senses, expects to find, all the way, green pastures and a flowery road to heaven? The amount of trial shall be as God pleases, who will try

no child of his above that he is able to bear, but will, with the trial, send the needed strength to bear it, or make a way of escape. But the discipline itself is essential, as the foundation of the full experience of God's goodness. That was a beautiful and most instructive fable of Esop, where the dying old man, who knew his sons were much disposed to indolence, leaving them a farm to cultivate, called them to his bedside, and told them that in a certain portion of one of his fields there was a great treasure hidden, and they must find it out. So they tilled every part of the farm with such extraordinary care to find the treasure, that it produced, in the end, a harvest of great worth. Thus God, when we come to him for grace, does not bestow his treasures directly, but draws the soul into such efforts, that they are produced even while we are seeking for them; and the grace thus gained is far more sure and permanent.

Now this view of the work of God's grace in the mind and the affections (and we think it is the Scripture view) puts one very much upon his guard against the mistake of perfection, against the monstrous idea that the Christian has ever attained a state, in which he has no need of confession for sin, or in which there is not a higher state before him that he *ought* to attain, or in which he is entirely cured of the malady of sin. The very statement of such a thing sets a humble Christian heart at once against it; not that it is not infinitely desirable to be perfectly freed from sin, for this would be a very heaven on earth; and perfect freedom from sin is what the newborn soul will long after and struggle after, in Christ. But perfect freedom from sin, we may very safely say, is never attained in this world. The supposition, the imagination, the belief of it, is almost inevitably the parent of pride, and so of every evil. This faith in one's perfect freedom from sin, while God's own discipline is going on to beat down sin, and is still needed in the soul, takes the place of faith in Christ, and plunges the soul *into* sin. So has that

great master of the human heart, and of the workings both of nature and of grace in it, John Bunyan, presented the consequences of the self-flattering idea of perfect freedom from sin. The Flatterer may seem a bright, glorious man, in a white robe, with white shining wings, without us; but he is the dark, deceitful old man within us, and in his boastful walk towards heaven makes a clean, wide, imperceptible sweep, like the gradual turning of a great steamer in the sea, round about *from* heaven, so that one not looking narrowly at the compass shall not know the change. But when he has got us thoroughly into his net, then the bright robe and shining wings drop off, and a dark form of Satan stands developed.

How absurd to speak of perfection, while the cause of evil remains. The most perfect man on earth, left to himself, would go away to Satan. Left to himself, then self alone, and the Satan in self, would be developed. What sort of perfection is that? Suppose you meet a lame man, said to have been entirely recovered. "Why, I thought you were perfectly well." "So I am." "But why then do you keep your crutches?" "Oh, the physicians say that if I laid them aside, the disease would immediately come back again." "Well then you certainly are not cured yet." No indeed, a man is not cured, until he is done with medicines and the physicians. Grace in this world is medicinal, curative, as long as the world stands. In heaven only is it the result, as well as the cause, of health. In this world there is never the absolutism of perfection.

Now the application of this chapter is almost equally to those who hope, and who do not hope, in Christ. If you do hope, you see your calling. You see that while God worketh in you, *you* must work. The only proof that God is working in you is your working. It is *hard* working, and you cannot lawfully entertain hope, nor possibly make any progress in grace without it. Work you, and God is working. Work hard, and God is working in you

mightily. Labor more abundantly than they all, and God's grace is laboring in you. You are not to wait for God, but to work; for God is beforehand with you, all the while. You are to wait *upon* God, but you are not to wait *for* God, before you obey his command to work, for God is already waiting for you, and always working. Work while the day lasts, work in reliance upon God, work in expectation of a glorious harvest, and the more you work, and the more earnestly you work, the easier it will be; and by and by your reward and your rejoicing shall be great in the Lord.

And you who do not hope; if ever such a one shall read this chapter; you see *your* calling also. If you ever do hope, it cannot be without your own efforts; not your efforts without God, nor your efforts before God, but your efforts according to God's working. God is always working, working while the day lasts, as he tells *you* to work. But the night cometh. God's time of working lasts no longer than your time of probation, and you know not when that may close. Therefore begin at once, for if God ceases to work, you never *will* begin. You are not to wait for God, for you cannot tell, you never will be able to tell, except from God's Word, in your first efforts, whether it is God or you. If you should go for the first time, and begin to pray, it might seem to you that you are alone, that there is nothing of God in that, that it is your miserably poor impulse and effort, not God's; and yet, if you thus really begin to work, in reliance on God in Christ, it is God working in you, and the first discovery of God, the very first proof of God working, is your work. The first hope of God's work begun for you, is your working after God. After God in two senses; seeking *for* him, and working *because he works*, because he *begins* the work and you *follow*. But if you *wait* for him, instead of *working* for him, then there is no hope. Begin, and it is your proof that God has begun; work, and work on, trusting in the Lamb of God, and you may be sure that he is working in you,

both to will and to do. Work, trusting, and you may sing, rejoicing :—

Lord, I believe Thou hast prepared
(Unworthy though I be)
For me a blood-bought free reward,
A golden harp for me!

'Tis strung and tuned for endless years,
And formed by power divine,
To sound in God the Father's ears
No other Name but Thine.

CHAPTER XVII.

Faith working by Love.—Assurance not an attainment, but a result.—Not a direct gift, but the consequence of Christ in the affections.—Not a direct duty, but the companion of duty, and its after-part.

Dr. Malan somewhere says beautifully, in giving an account of his own earliest Christian experience, that the Lord Jesus awakened him, as a mother does her sleeping babe, with a kiss. So sweet and gentle were the Saviour's dealings with his soul. He was taught faith, as it were, by a kiss, and looking up, beheld the face of love divine bending over him; and then that language of faith and submission began to be taught him, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? This is always the language of faith, hope, and love, which graces, if either of them be genuine, all go together, and all carry the soul not merely to Christ's feet, but to Christ's service. And the soul's disposition and desire to serve Christ, and delight in that service, are the best genuine proofs and fruits of faith, hope, and love. These graces are bestowed and kept alive, for self-discipline, for exercise, for results, from glory to glory, till we reach the church above.

There are two cases of conversion in the Scriptures of the New Testament, strikingly similar in some points of view, and illustrative of divine grace, the one before, the other after, the ascension of our Blessed Lord. The one is of a man whose Pagan name, under the baptism of Satan, was Legion; the other is of Saul of Tarsus. They

both were possessed of many devils; they both met Christ unexpectedly, not knowing him; they both were brought to their right mind with a word; they both were at once set to-work in Christ's service; they both caused all men to marvel at their preaching; they both were illustrations of the purpose of God in the bestowment of faith, and of the happiness and glory of self-denying love.

> Heaven doth with us, as we with torches do,
> Not light them for themselves.

If we ever think otherwise, think we *are* lighted for ourselves, then if we are really lighted, our Lord will show us our mistake, and teach us how to let our light shine for others; and if it do not shine for others, it is not lighted at all.

It is said of that wild man among the mountains, in the swinish country of the Gadarenes, that when our Saviour, after healing him, was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. He would have gone with Christ to the ends of the earth, to stay with him. Howbeit, Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them all how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. Our first lesson in this case is of the certainty and earnestness of desire with which a new-converted soul turns to Christ, and longs after him. Christ is its first happiness. But our second lesson is of the way in which this first desire, if genuine, will certainly work, and the way which the Lord Jesus has appointed for proving and sustaining it. The lessons from Paul's case are similar, but the wild man of the mountains saw Christ before him in the ship; Paul did not.

There are two things in the Christian Life; labor and happiness. We put labor first, happiness second. This is the true order, the great principle, at least for depraved

beings, under a necessity of coming back to God, denying themselves, and seeking happiness in his service. Labor in heaven is unknown, in the sense in which we think of it in this world, connecting it as we do with ideas of weariness, painfulness, and difficulty. But all the saints in heaven have done with labor in this sense, and there they all *rest* from their labors. In the celestial world all labor, work, business, all activity for God, is mere sacred, unmingled, absorbing delight; it is happiness itself, and not an introduction to it, or mere preparation for it. But in this world labor is labor, and as such it goes before happiness, *must* go before it. It is the only gate to happiness. There is no green lane. A man must labor to get into the kingdom of heaven. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." A man labors under the burden of his sins, when he sees and feels himself to be *out* of the kingdom of heaven. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

But when a man is once *in* the kingdom of heaven, even in this world, then the order seems to be reversed. Then, ordinarily, the first thing he experiences is happiness. It is not always so, for sometimes in the soul's very first experience in the Christian life there is more of conflict than relief, more of labor than rest, more of fear than hope. But generally, and in proportion to the clearness with which the soul sees Christ, and the hearty faith with which it throws itself upon him, there is happiness uppermost in the man's heart. There is the healing of his diseases, the deliverance from his burden, the pardon of sin, a calmed and holy conscience, a peaceful heart, a sweet stillness after the tempest, a clear, soft, lovely sky, Christ shining the world beneath his feet, the power of temptation broken, Satan and his angels withdrawn, heaven opening, the path way of the soul traced clear, bright, blissful, into the gates of the New Jerusalem.

The opening heavens around me shine
With beams of sacred bliss,
When Jesus shows his mercy mine,
And whispers I am his.

This is the first state, the first experience. It is so sweet, so grateful, such a foretaste of heaven, often so ravishing, that the soul sometimes sits and weeps for very joy. It is so sweet for one that has all his life been a madman, to come and sit, clothed, and in his right mind, at the feet of Jesus! Sometimes a pardoned soul sits like Mary before Christ, washing his feet with her tears and wiping them with the hairs of her head, and feels as though it could do this for ever. Sometimes with this joy there is a trembling apprehension of losing it, of encountering temptation, of going forth anywhere among men, the world is so full of sin, and of the soul's enemies. Sometimes, indeed, the first type of character, the first manifestation of grace, is somewhat different. Along with this joy, there comes an irresistible desire to bring others to experience the same, and the soul feels as if it could go up and down the world singing and preaching, Come to Christ! Come to Christ! But in general the experience of this man among the mountains comes first, and is the first type of character, and the soul does not, at once, begin to think of laboring for others. It begs to stay with Christ. Oh! it would have nothing to do henceforth but to look at him, to love him, to commune with him, to abide with him, to sit at his feet, singing and making melody in the heart unto the Lord. We say not that this is the best type, although it is the instinctive impulse of the new-born soul, in a sense of its weakness and dependence upon Christ, to hide beneath the shelter of his wings, and get some little experience of strength in him, that it may begin to work for him. The new regenerated soul, as a new-born babe, desires the sincere milk of the Word, that it may grow thereby. And this growth, of necessity, is gradual, so that the young convert cannot at once go forth as a full

grown experienced soldier of Christ to fight for him, but is wise, at first, to go tremblingly, little by little, into the conflict. David was not sent at once, to fight with Goliah, but at first kept sheep in quiet landscapes, and met the bear and the lion, in the circuit of his own experience, much less dangerous to contend with than savage men out of it. This was the way in which he was taught confidence in God, and was prepared for the great work God had for him to do. Not that a great faith in God, at once, at the outset, and a great instant desire to win souls to Christ, is not a higher type of character, for it certainly is. And when it comes from God, and is not mingled with human confidence, God will send such a Great-Heart at once upon its mission.

But we say, in general, the new convert desires, and wisely desires, to be with Christ alone, and must learn gradually the great lesson that labor *for* Christ is the only way to keep *with* Christ. But sometimes the soul indulges this spiritual luxury longer than the call of duty permits. It stays so long in the mere exercise of prayer and praise, that active labor becomes distasteful; it shrinks back. The spiritual energy, which would have grown by action, is weakened. Difficulties have time to spring up. The first love declines a little, before the first habit of self-denying love in labor is formed. And then conscience, little by little, is injured, by the soul staying inactive with Christ, when it ought to have gone out and worked for him. And so the very happiness of the Christian life at first may be the occasion of darkness afterwards; the occasion, though not the cause, for sin is the cause.

After the Christian life is begun, there is no such thing as happiness without labor. Happiness may come first in the Christian life, may be the first experience; but labor must come second, or if it does not, happiness flies away. And ever in this world the order is somewhat reversed from what it is in the celestial world; labor must come first, happiness second, then labor and happiness go hand

in hand. Christ gives the soul deliverance, and then says to it, Go work in my vineyard. Christ gives the soul a sense of pardon and a taste of his preciousness, and then says to it, Learn to rely on me, and in the strength of this mercy go forth on your pilgrimage of duty. If ye love me, keep my commandments. Go home to thy friends, and tell them, and tell all the world, how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and as you go, I will be with thee. But if you go not, I depart from you. This is your world of labor; I have called you to labor. It is labor of love, but still it is labor. Be faithful, and I will shine upon you. He that seeketh his life shall lose it; but he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.

Now this wild man taken from the mountains and the tombs and made to sit at the feet of Jesus, is a beautiful illustration of Christian experience. He prayed Christ that he might be with him, but Jesus suffered him not. It seemed strange, did it not, that he should reject so touching an appeal? Poor, wretched maniac! torn for years of devils, and the worst devils of all were those of his own passions, how natural it was, nay how right, how beautiful, what a lovely proof of gratitude and love, for him to wish thenceforth to stay with his heavenly deliverer. O let me never, never depart from thee! Lord, let me stay with thee. Let me never go back to the world, nor enter again my native city of destruction, but, oh! let me stay with thee, let me stay with thee! In my right mind, let me stay with thee, let me stay with thee!

Poor, distressed, simple, but now happy being! The Lord Jesus Christ was the first human face divine that he had looked upon with a ray of intelligent sympathy, perhaps for years. And oh! how ravishing it was to him! It was the first face that had looked on him with kindness, and it was the kindness of one who loved him so much as to die for him. It was a face of love like the face of an angel, like an opening into heaven, like the face of God;

nay, it *was* the face of God in Christ, reconciling the soul unto himself, and looking on it in his own renewed image Poor madman! He had been in the mountains and among the tombs, and men had done nothing with him but to beat him and chain him and fly from him, and he had been crying and cutting himself with stones; and now there was a being looking on him, that loved him! and he was clothed and in his right mind, and Christ had clothed him, and Christ had given him this right mind, and Christ had driven away the demons that had possessed and torn him! And he knew it was Christ that had done this; and it was so sweet, so ravishing to him to sit and look at Christ, and wonder at himself in his new array, in inward and outward quietude, no fiends within him, nor angry passions, but all peace; no savage men nor swine around him, but Jesus, his healer, his Redeemer, his Lord, his all! Indeed, it was not strange that he desired to be with him; it had been strange, if he had not.

But our Blessed Lord had much for him to do, and knew what was best for him. He must now make use of his restored, regenerated reason, in bringing others to *their* senses. And he told him, Go home to thy friends, and tell *them* how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And now the humble happy man shows another proof of true piety. He is ready to do just what his Lord bids him. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? His desire to stay with Christ had been a proof at first most delightful of his piety; for no man would love and long to be with Christ, without divine grace in his heart. But now his willingness to go instantly and do Christ's work was a still more blessed proof of sincere piety. And he departed and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him. And all men did marvel.

And no wonder that they marvelled. What descriptions he would give of Christ! In what melting accents would he speak of his tenderness! How he would urge all to

come to him! How he would prepare Christ's way in the heart! And this the madman of the mountains! He was a most successful preacher, we doubt not. He told his story so truly, so tremblingly, and preached Christ so winningly, that all men marvelled. And his story never lost its freshness. We should like to have seen him again with Christ, to have watched him in another interview, as very probably he had many. But the last we see of him is preaching, laboring, publishing. We shall see him again in glory, and doubtless, when we see him there, we shall see many a soul around him, won to Christ by his faithfulness. The world marvelled at the change in him; perhaps some thought him crazier than before; they thought his madness had taken a new type indeed, but it was still madness. But others believed him, and saw that now indeed he was in his right mind, and came to Christ themselves through his saying, to be healed.

Now the lessons we may draw from our Saviour's loving kindness to this man are very sweet, very beautiful, very important. In the first place, it is clear that in this world labor is better, more precious, than happiness. Labor should be our object, fruit for Christ, rather than happiness, other than enjoyment. To do good, and to win souls to Christ, should be our work, leaving happiness to follow, if it will, and if not, work on. Our Lord's method of discipline with this man, and the routine of duty marked out for him, rebukes the life of quietism, monkery, or mere meditative holiness. It commends, exalts, and commands the life of active love. It rebukes those who are too exclusively or too anxiously seeking for assurance, and it tells them that love and labor for Christ are better than assurance. Nay, assurance cannot be but by love and labor, otherwise it is mere imagination. Frames of feeling may be delusive, even when we seem to be sitting at the feet of Christ, if there be nothing to try them of the nature of self-denial; but laboring in Decapolis when, though self would rather not, Christ bids us, is not so likely to prove a

mistake. If we strive to stay with Christ as a selfish thing, we lose Christ. But if in love we go forth to obey Christ, we carry him with us everywhere, and he stays with us for ever. We may seem to be leaving our privileges, or denying ourselves what seems necessary for Christian enjoyment, but if Christ calls, all this will be more than made up to an obedient disciple.

There is a beautiful parable related of a holy ancient recluse, an inmate, like Thomas A'Kempis, or like the devout Luther, of a house mistaken in that age as the gate to heaven, which illustrates these truths, and is more than mere fancy. The pious old monk, it is said, one day when he had been unusually fervent in prayer, found his darkened cell suddenly illuminated by an unearthly light, and there stood before him a vision of the Saviour, his countenance beaming with love, his hands outstretched with a gesture of kind invitation. At that same moment the peal of the convent bell began to sound, which called the monk, in the regular course of his duty, to take his turn in distributing alms to the poor at the gate. For an instant he hesitated, so absorbed in the rapturous vision as to question whether he should not stay to enjoy it, and leave some one else to look after the poor, but the next instant found him, true to his vow of charity, on his way to the gate. As soon as he had finished his work of relieving the poor, his self-denying work of humble love, he returned in sadness to his cell, not doubting that the heavenly vision had taken flight. But to his surprise and joy, it was still there, and the face was beaming upon him with a smile even more full than before of divine beauty and ineffable love; and there came from the celestial vision these words, "*Hadst thou stayed, I had fled.*" Thus it is that the Saviour stays with those, and shines upon them, who imitate his own example of self-denying love. To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

We are taught by the wild man's experience as well as

Paul's, that as Christ, in healing us, has an object beyond ourselves, a wider purpose of benevolence, so *we* ought to *look* beyond ourselves, endeavoring to fulfil Christ's purposes of mercy. Let every man, says the apostle, look not upon his own things, but also on the things of others. Every measure of grace imparted to us we are to consider as given not for ourselves alone, but as stewards for others. That is the very expression which the apostle uses. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. All true piety is forgetful of self, and anxious to make others holy and happy. And all acquisitions in piety that do not tend that way, or that stop with self, or nourish spiritual indolence and pride, or that lead to anything like self-exaltation on account of high spiritual frames, or great spiritual enjoyment, are very likely to be spurious, or if not spurious may be occasions of advantage to the tempter of the soul. Whatever leads to spiritual theories of perfection, rather than to humble, diligent, benevolent action, or to self-congratulation, rather than the exaltation of Christ, is suspicious and dangerous.

The nature and purpose of the Christian ordinances, which God gives us, receive a beautiful illustration in this light of active love, especially such an institution as that of the Lord's Supper. We enjoy it not for ourselves merely, but for others, and Christ manifests himself to us here, and renews our assurances of pardon, and gives the communications of his grace, that in the strength and joy of such an interview with him, we may go away with animation to our work of love, go to exercise patience under difficulties, go to tell how great things Christ can do for the soul. Having received grace we go to minister the same as stewards. Hence the feeling experienced sometimes of unwillingness to go down from mounts of vision and enjoyment such as these into a world of trial may not always be of the best sort. We are to feel that these are refreshments granted on our pilgrimage to

strengthen us for future progress. These are arbors amid the Hill Difficulty, where we may sit down to rest, but not lie down to sleep. If, like Christian, we get satisfied with ourselves, and so amuse ourselves with reading our roll, we are likely to fall asleep even at the moment of our most precious privileges, and then the night comes on, and we have to walk in the darkness. Thus the place and season even of spiritual enjoyment may prove a means of self-indulgence. Peter's unwillingness to go down from the mount, where he had enjoyed such a rapturous view of the glory of the Saviour, was natural, it was praiseworthy, it was almost inevitable. But Peter would have stayed there all his lifetime, and forgetting a world lying in wickedness, and the need of his efforts in it, and the great purpose of the Saviour's sufferings and death. Sufferings and death were the last things Peter was thinking of just then, although death had been the theme of the scene of transfiguration. But he knew so little about it, that the very next day, when our Lord, in preparation for their journey to Jerusalem, and for the things that should befall them there, preached to them concerning his sufferings and resurrection, they understood not one syllable of all that he uttered, and about the same time disputed among themselves who should be the greatest. So little did they know their own hearts, and so little certain connexion there was between the enjoyment of a sight of Christ's glory in the Mount, and the spirit of humility and of patient toil for Christ.

It could not have been much more than a week either one way or the other, from this scene, when Peter so openly and with so much self-confident assumption began to rebuke our Lord for the prediction of his sufferings, and to dissuade him from his work of self-denying love. And our Lord called him Satan, and told him to get out of his sight, so earthly and offensive was his spirit. So we see that ravishing views of Christ are not necessarily proofs of a readiness to labor for Christ, or to suffer for him. And

such instances ought to make us very careful how we indulge ourselves in self-congratulation on account of remarkable seasons of spiritual enjoyment, or elevated visions on the Mount, or think ourselves near to perfection because of our sweet frames of feeling. James and John, the other companions of the Saviour in the Mount, were also so far from possessing his spirit, that a short time after this they engaged in the same quarrel about the superiority, and when the Samaritans would not receive our Lord, they were for burning up the whole city and all its inhabitants. Perhaps this intense, fiery zeal grew in part out of the very view they had had of our Lord's glory in the transfiguration. Ye know not what spirit ye are of! There may have been much of self and pride mingled with their enjoyment on the Mount, and the self and pride came out, when the glory and excitement of the Mount had departed. So we should be upon our guard, remembering that all true enjoyment and real attainment in piety will leave the heart more humble, gentle, patient, kind, and self-distrustful than before.

Perhaps there has been a great mistake made about assurance. It is not a thing designed to be labored after as an end, but a thing that can only come by the way, in laboring after Christ. Doubtless it is too much sought, too anxiously desired, for itself, for enjoyment, for comfort; while holiness, growth in grace, likeness to Christ, is not enough sought for itself, or for Christ. The end is put for the means, and the means for the end; that is, *holiness*, which should be an ultimate object with the Christian, and likeness to Christ, which is the end of all discipline, is sought as the means of assurance, of comfort; and assurance, which is but the means of holiness, is made the great end. This is a sad mistake, and yet very prevalent.

Now in proportion as there is likeness to Christ, there will, ordinarily, be assurance, as one result, a thing by the way. But it is not so certain that in proportion as there is what is called assurance there will be holiness, likeness

to Christ. Knowledge, says the apostle, puffeth up, but charity *buildeth up*, charity edifieth. Love to Christ is too much occupied with him and his service, to be over-anxious for self-enjoyment or assurance; and where Christ is reigning supreme in the affections, and bringing every thought into captivity to his love, the soul desires no other assurance than the beholding of him. It is the contemplation of the Saviour, and not of self, that is our source of power and liberty. We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

There will be other changes on earth, and doubtless they are necessary for this great change. "The sensible comfort," said Mr. Berridge in a characteristic letter to Lady Huntingdon, "will not last always nor long. In the present state of things a winter is as much wanted to continue the earth fruitful, as a summer. If the grass was always growing, it would soon grow to nothing; just as flowers, that blow much and long, generally blow themselves to death. And as it is thus with the ground, so is it with the laborers too. Afflictions, desertions, and temptations, are as needful as consolations. Jonah's whale will teach a good lesson, as well as Pisgah's top; and a man may sometimes learn as much from being a night and a day in the deep, as from forty days on the mount. I see Jonah come out of a whale and cured of rebellion; I see Moses go up to the Mount with meekness, but come down in a huff, and break the tables. Further, I see three picked disciples attending their Master to the mount, and fall asleep there. Jesus has given you a hand and heart to execute great things for his glory, and therefore he will deal you out a suitable measure of afflictions to keep your balance steady."

This is truth taught by experience, the growth of God's Word. It is not theory, nor imagination, but sober reality; reality in a world not of unclouded light, but of discipline to prepare for light, and of the trial of the soul to see what

it will do, what is its stay and assurance, when everything seems to fail. The experience of the Christian soul is beautifully expressed by Cowper.

When darkness long has veiled my mind,
  And smiling day once more appears,
Then, my Redeemer, then I find
  The folly of my doubts and fears.
Straight I upbraid my wandering heart;
  And blush that I should ever be
Thus prone to act so base a part,
  Or harbor one hard thought of Thee.

O let me then at length be taught
  What I am still so slow to learn,
That God is love, and changes not,
  Nor knows the shadow of a turn.
Sweet truth, and easy to repeat!
  But when my faith is sharply tried,
I find myself a learner yet,
  Unskilful, weak, and apt to slide.

But O my Lord, one look from Thee
  Subdues my disobedient will;
Drives doubt and discontent away,
  And thy rebellious worm is still.
Thou art as ready to forgive,
  As I am ready to repine;
Thou therefore all the praise receive,
  Be shame and self-abhorrence mine.

DEVELOPMENT, DISCIPLINE,

AND

FRUITS OF FAITH.

PART THIRD.

GRACE AND TRUTH.

CHRIST IN THE LIFE.

WINDINGS OF THE RIVER, CONTINUED.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Illustrations of the Life of Faith in Christ's Apostles.—The Life of Faith a Missionary Spirit at the very outset, and a life of Love continued.

THE first instances of faith, of conversion, and of the commencement of the Christian life in the New Testament, are recorded in the first chapter of the gospel of John. We there behold John the Baptist introducing to Christ the earliest among his chosen disciples, and there also we find the first instance of that beautiful and comprehensive designation of the life of faith, as *following Jesus.* Instead now of going into a speculative tracery or calendar of the various virtues in the life of faith, or attempting to compose in essays a directory of religious ethics, we shall just, for the present, contemplate the life of faith, or Christ in the life, as illustrated in the experience of John, Peter, Andrew, Philip, and Nathaniel. The previous training of these disciples, the evidence before them, the decisiveness and results of their faith, the manner of its working and ruling in their life, the experience and trials of Peter, the creed of doubt, and the creed of faith, as by himself manifested, with the reproof and instruction of the

Saviour's mercy, are points which may occupy us with more of novelty, and possibly more of profit, than an enumeration of rules or precepts for the Divine life, whether after the manner of the antique or modern religious guide-books or philosophers. Indeed, what are all things that do not bring us to Christ, and throw us upon him, but vanities? There are three things in the Life of Faith, and they all begin and end with Christ, COME UNTO ME, FOLLOW ME, ABIDE IN ME. Whatsoever there be without these three things, there is nothing of regeneration, nor of Christ. There may be a coming to the Church, and a following of the Church, and an abiding in the Church; there may be a coming to the sacraments, and a following of endless genealogies, and an abiding in the rubrics of form, after the commandments and traditions of men; but if Christ be not the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, there is nothing of true religion. God pronounces a woe upon those, whose fear towards him is taught by the precepts of men; and Christ says, In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

There were three sayings of that noble martyr and saint of Jesus Christ, Bishop Hooper, that are worthy to be written in gold. "The Church of Christ," said he, "the more it was and is burdened with man's laws, the further it is from the true and sincere verity of God's Word." And again he said, "It is mine opinion unto all the world that the Scripture solely, and the Apostles' Church, is to be followed, and no man's authority, be he Augustine, Tertullian, or even Cherubim or Seraphim." And again, "I had rather trust to the shadow of the Church which the Scripture teaches, than to all the men's writings since the death of Polycarp."

But now we are to look for a moment at the Apostles' lives, the example of their faith and obedience. It is recorded that on one occasion John stood and two of his disciples on the banks of the Jordan, in the midst of his baptizing ministry introductory to Christ. And looking

upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they FOLLOWED JESUS.

The period of this most interesting and solemn occurrence was when John the Baptist had been exercising his ministry about half a year. It was soon after the event of the Baptism of our Blessed Lord, at the conclusion of the nearly two months which elapsed during the temptation in the wilderness, when John was baptizing and teaching in Bethabara beyond Jordan. These disciples of John, with all his followers, had been baptized preparatory to the coming of the Messiah, with the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. This baptism was intended and regarded as their introduction to the enjoyment of the blessings of Messiah's reign. His coming was expected speedily, and John's baptism of repentance was a preparation of heart and of life for him.

Although all the disciples of John were not serious, or praying, or penitent persons, but multitudes came to him without any true piety in their hearts, we have reason to believe that the particular persons here mentioned were already under the disciplinary power of divine truth and grace. We have reason to believe that they were devout Jews, seriously attentive to all the duties of the Jewish religion. They were faithful to the service of the Temple. There they waited, as humble, expectant worshippers, at the proper times for going thither to wait upon God. There they saw the sacrifices offered, and felt the power of the Law in their consciences, and their need of a Redeemer to take away their sins. On the great days of propitiation, and on other days, they stood gazing upon the ceremonies of the offerings for sin, so solemn, so significant, and expected the great coming atonement to take away transgression.

We may suppose them to have been attentive to all the duties of God's sanctuary, whether in the Temple, or in the synagogues with the assemblies of the people, on the

Sabbath or on other days. Their instructions hitherto had been those of the law and the prophets. Supposing them to have waited upon these instructions with prayer, they might have learned much concerning the great sacrifice. The law taught them their guilt, and the ceremonial law showed their need of an atonement. But as demonstrated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it simply prefigured an atonement and a Saviour to come, and was designed for faith; it was a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ, and if it produced, in their approaches to God, that frame of mind, which prepared them to receive, humbly and believingly, the gift of salvation in God's way through Christ, that was the accomplishment of the schoolmaster's design, that was all that the schoolmaster could perform. It was under the power of all such instruction in the Old Testament that these disciples of John waited upon him for light. Thus waiting, convicted, humble, prayerful, John appeared to lead them to Christ. If their hearts were thus prepared by grace, they were ready to receive John's revelation. And John, with his instructions, and his baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, was for them, as it were, the bridge between the Old and the New Dispensation.

The instructions of John appear to us singularly evangelical. Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world! But in truth this is neither more nor less than the voice of the law and the prophets, beginning then to be rightly interpreted. The Old Testament, with the veil taken away, is as evangelical as the New. We are not sufficiently aware, or we do not sufficiently remember, that this voice, Behold the Lamb of God, is the voice of the Old Testament as well as of the New. In the Old, before the coming of Christ, it was not, indeed, plain, as after his coming, and could not be; because no prediction can be understood before it is fulfilled so plainly as it can afterwards. But still it might be clearly recognised by humble hearts that had been looking through the

types to the reality and substance. The voice and meaning of the Old Testament are the same as those of the New, with this difference, that in the Old the voice respects the future and the unseen, Behold the Lamb of God that is to come,—but in the New it respects a reality already witnessed, which was, and is, and is to come; in the Old, a transaction to be performed, in the New, the great transaction finished. John's words to the two disciples regarded a Saviour directly before them in person; but yet the meaning of the Lamb of God they could understand but indistinctly until the crucifixion. At this moment they understood no more than they had learned from the Old Testament and from John. When they heard the words of John, Behold the Lamb of God! and saw the being whom he pointed out to them, the sight of Christ just then gave them no more insight into the character and work of Christ as their Saviour than they had had before; for they were not as yet acquainted with him. But they knew from John that he was the Messiah, and thenceforward it was their duty to trust in him, and to become acquainted with him.

And now we are to mark the instant and ready obedience of the soul instructed by the Spirit and the Word of God. *They followed Jesus.* This was now their work. The whole expectation, anxiety, doubt, faith, uncertainty, of all their preceding life, had come to a sudden stop and point of determination. All the instructions of their youth, all the lessons of a thousand years from the prophets and the law, all the teachings of the temple and the synagogue, all the predictive rites, forms, and ceremonies, were at an instant pause before this Divine being, and would bear them no further, but had to come to the limit, beyond which they could not go, beyond which revelation itself could not throw a ray of light, nor disclose a path of duty. The stream had borne them to their landing place, and they must step on shore, and follow Jesus. The Word of God without them, the Spirit and the Word within them; the

Old Testament; John, whose mission as a prophet they felt, knew, and acknowledged, and the teachings of God's Spirit in their hearts, all directed them to follow Jesus. They were to do this as their one grand business and duty of existence. They were to become acquainted with him, to be instructed of him, submissive to him, to have their sins taken away by him, to see more and more of his character and glory, and to give themselves up entirely, unquestionably, to his disposition and guidance. Their light might be found faint at first, but it should increase: they were simply, confidingly, to follow Christ, and they should not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. The Messiah having come, they were no longer their own, but must obey and follow him. All the struggles for light and knowledge in the world ceased with that; all the wisdom of the world became foolishness, that did not lead to that; that did not, as it were, take the soul and throw it down at the feet of this Divine Saviour. All the beaten paths of revelation came to that; all evidence, all providence, all prophecy, all history, all faith, all knowledge, all hope, centred there.

Now if this was the case with them and their situation, how much more is it the case with us and ours! It would be for us the greatest happiness, if we would bring ourselves precisely to the point, if we would let divine truth and grace bring us just there, where these two disciples were brought through the instrumentality of their inspired teacher, just at the gate of this simple duty, to follow Christ and learn of him. It is for us, as for them, the gate that we must all pass through, or for us there is no futurity but one of darkness. Our evidence, as theirs, brings us just to this point, and leaves us there; it shuts us up to Christ. Up to that point, it is all light, all clearness; paths of light, paths of glory, all converging there; but beyond that point, anywhere but through the gate of Christ, through him who is the Door, the Way, the Truth, the Life, it is utter darkness—darkness and despair.

Now let us look at the superior and increasing nature of that evidence, which brings us just where these two disciples stood before Christ, thrown with their whole existence, for time and eternity, upon him. Christ had not yet died and risen again. *They* saw not the scheme of redemption as *we* see it. They could not, as yet, behold the evidence of the Old Testament, which had brought them to Christ, in the light of Christ's crucifixion; but the light of the Old Testament had simply brought them to Christ, to be instructed by him as to the nature of that work which he was to accomplish as the Saviour of the world. *We* see the work *accomplished;* we behold the Old Testament Scriptures themselves in the light of the Cross which they predicted, and with the bright interpretation of that Saviour, whom they foreshadowed to the inquiring mind. We have the evidence of his death, his resurrection, his Church established, his promises fulfilled, his Spirit poured down, his inspired word in the Gospels and Epistles, and the practical explanation and demonstration of the system of redemption by his cross, in thousands and millions of instances. The whole of this evidence, instead of diminishing, has been increasing with every generation. It is evidence multiplied by experiment in thousands on thousands of clear cases, evidence proved by successive testimony of the most credible witnesses who have ever lived, the best men, the most enlightened, upright, honest, and unimpeachable, of all their race, who have themselves tried the experiment of belief demanded in the Word of God, and been saved from sin and death by it.

They who first made this experiment stood alone. They stood only on God's Word; they had nothing else to stand upon; they believed in Christ simply on God's testimony, and they themselves became the first human witnesses for God. We believe also on *man's* testimony, and in the nature of things, by the constitution of the human mind, we cannot help it. It is not in our power to throw off

the accumulated weight of the testimony of the Church of Christ in all ages, nor to measure the increased power of the Word, or rather the increased facility of faith in it, through that testimony. And though if we are true Christians, if we have the Spirit of God within us, we also could stand upon the Word of God alone, even if all things else were taken away from us, it is nevertheless difficult for us to conceive the power of that faith, the greatness and sublimity of that solitary act of faith, which, prior to all human experience, could believe in Christ Jesus and rest on him for salvation, on the simple and sole testimony of the Word of God. There is much significance in that passage in one of Paul's Epistles, where it is said that God of his good pleasure and purpose gave to the then saints the inheritance and adoption of children, that they *should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.* Those who first trusted were certainly the greatest triumphs of grace.

As soon as the revelation was made to these two disciples, Behold the Lamb of God, they followed Jesus. It was no desertion of John on their part, but a simple obedience to his directions; for this was the Great Being of whom he had told them before, that he should baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and now it was their business and duty to follow him. Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and said unto them, What seek ye? He would try them, what sort of inquirers they were, what spirit they were of. He would set them to self-examination, that they might know their own hearts in the matter they were entering on, and not be deceived. He would prove those who came to him, and would show them their own hearts. He told the multitude on one occasion, when they followed him, that they were seeking him not because they had seen the miracles which he did, and were convinced by the evidence of his Messiahship, but because they had eaten of the loaves, and were filled. The *motive* in religion is *everything;* it determines the

character. These disciples might have followed Christ by name, and yet not have sought nor followed the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. It was important that they should themselves inquire and know *what* they were seeking.

Then, said they unto him, Master, where dwellest thou? They would know his residence, that they might know when and where to resort to him. Then he saith unto them, come and see. It was a friendly invitation to his dwelling-place. He would not merely tell them where he could be found, but would bring them and go with them, if they were ready to go, at once. Come now, and see. Acquaintance with Christ is a matter of personal experiment. The voice of the gospel always is, Come and see, come and make the experiment, come and know your Saviour, come and drink, come and live. So these disciples came. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day. He invited them, and they abode with him, for it was towards evening, and the day was far spent. Here they listened to his instruction for hours. What a sacred, blessed season as the guests of Christ, enjoying his heavenly conversation! They took their evening meal with him, and he expounded unto them the Scriptures, and at night led them to God in prayer around the family altar. It was indeed a sacred, blessed season.

Thus it is that Christ deals with the souls that come to him. He would have them stay with him at once, and learn of him, listen to him, commune with him, be taught of him in prayer, and in the Word of God, and in all spiritual duties. He would have an acquaintance at once with the soul that comes to him. And the soul that comes should come *to stay*, should come once for all, to stay as long *immediately* with Christ as he chooses, or to go at once and work for him, like the missionary in Decapolis, the converted madman of the mountains. But these disciples stayed quietly with him for the present, sitting at

his feet like Mary, and hearing his words. They had everything to learn; they were to be at school as pupils, before they could be prepared to go forth as teachers, as apostles; and Christ began with them this very afternoon and evening, that night and the next morning; and the next day they went forth with him upon his missionary work. In that work they were to follow him, behold his example, learn his manner and habits, be imbued with his instructions, and baptized with his Spirit. From the moment of that evening's abode with him, they were his disciples, belonging to him, and were beginning to learn in what way they must leave all and follow him.

Also, we cannot fail to remark, in the very outset they began their own missionary work, that work which is the whole business of Christianity towards man, and the fruit of the Christian life towards God. Even in their first coming to Christ themselves, they brought others with them. It was a delightful example of the practical, social, sympathizing, working power and tendency of true piety, and of the direction and manner in which it works. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith to him, We have found the Messias, the Anointed of God, the Hope of Israel, the Desire of all nations! It is he; there can be no doubt of it; we know that we have found him; come and see. And so he brought him to Jesus.

Now this was the very Spirit of Christianity. Return to thine own house, and tell thy friends and relatives how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had mercy on thee. It seems there was no need of this command of Christ in the case of Andrew; his own heart led him in that very way, and it was a lovely development of character in him. No doubt he was thinking of his brother all the way to the dwelling of Jesus, and no sooner had he and John arrived with Christ, and entered the house, to abide with him that day, than he thought within

himself, I must go and find Peter first, and we will be here together. Perhaps he said as much to Christ; Lord, suffer me first to go and find my brother. On one occasion, when Christ had called one to follow him, and he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father, Christ had answered him with a refusal; Let the dead bury their dead, but come thou and preach the kingdom of God. But now it was the very work for which he had called Andrew, that Andrew asked permission to go upon, Suffer me first to go and find my brother; and doubtless our Blessed Lord was well pleased with this affectionate and faithful trait in Andrew's character.

The place where they then were was not the birth-place of Andrew and Peter, but a town near the river Jordan, perhaps Bethabara, whither they had come as John's disciples, where John was then baptizing. Andrew easily found Peter, and still more easily brought him to Christ. They had doubtless often communed together concerning the Messiah, and were animated by the same views and wishes, and had been baptized with the same preparatory baptism of John; so that Andrew knew that he was carrying a page of glad tidings to Peter, which would be gladly received. Hence the confidence with which he cries out on first seeing his brother, We have found the Messias, even him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets did write. There was no persuasion needed, after this, to bring him to Jesus; and Christ's declaration to him on receiving him was the adoption of him at once as a disciple. These three then spent the day with Christ together, Andrew, Peter, and John, John being without doubt the other of the two first mentioned, the one not mentioned by name; so that we have here an account of the first calling of three of great note among the apostles, Andrew, Peter, and John. For the present they remained with Christ, but afterwards for a season returned to their homes and their occupation in fishing, in which employment our Saviour found them busied, when he came to call them to his ministry as his

constant attendants. He may have instructed them beforehand that they were to return to their worldly calling, and abide in it at present, till such time as they should hear from him authoritatively again, and receive from him their effectual call to the ministry, which they must then instantly obey. The account of this effectual calling is given in Matthew iv. 18–21, and also in Mark i. 16–21, and also, on a different occasion, in Luke v. 1–11, or the same occasion, with a more full and minute relation of the circumstances.

Now the conduct of these faithful disciples is a great rebuke to those who are hesitating about following Christ. No matter what may be their reasons for such hesitation; there is no difficulty in which the situation of these men will not match them. They may be in doubt; but if so, they doubt in the presence of far greater, clearer evidence than Peter, James, Andrew, and John possessed, who nevertheless on the ground of that evidence left everything and followed Christ. The truth is, *these disciples did not make light of it, whereas men now do;* and there is the great difference. These disciples came in a most serious, seeking, prayerful, pondering frame, and in this frame they found Christ. If any man will come like them now, he will find Christ.

And then, having found him, the business of life is to follow Christ. In following our respective callings, we are to follow him. We may follow him as closely as Peter, and yet be the most of our time in our ships mending our nets, or casting them for fishes, if that be the calling in which we are called to the Lord. The change is, that whereas we mended our nets, and gathered our fishes, and sold them, before, *for ourselves*, now we do it all in a sweet reference to Christ, all in looking to him, all that we may follow him. We burned incense to our own net before, now we give up net, business, profits, all to Christ. We *must* do this, or we are not Christ's. We may not, perhaps, be called *away* from our counters like Matthew, or

our ships and nets like Peter and John, or our law-studies like Paul, but we *must* give up *ourselves*, in all these pursuits, if we stay in them, to Christ, and must pursue them for Christ, and pursue *him* in *them*, or we are none of his.

Moreover, we shall have to beware, in abiding in the same calling wherein we are called, lest we fall back to the pursuit of that calling on the old mere worldly principles. There is this powerful temptation, by which the god of this world succeeds in alluring and destroying many souls now, which had but little weight with those who were called entirely away from their employments to follow Christ personally. At the same time let it be remembered that if this temptation be resisted, if the soul does faithfully follow Christ and labor for him in pursuing a worldly calling, it is a great and blessed triumph, and shall have a great crown. If a man lays all his plans of earthly business, and prosecutes them, with a sacred supreme regard to his duty as Christ's steward, gathering and using his money for Christ, his faith is great, and his reward will be great. A merchant, for instance, who is truly an example for Christ, who truly pursues his business for Christ, and maintains always a frame of heavenly-mindedness,

> Like ships at sea, while in, above the world,

may be so far forth a greater Christian, than a minister of the gospel, who pursues *his* business for Christ; there being more to be overcome in the former case, greater difficulties in the way, and perhaps greater temptations. And certainly a man's crown of glory by and by will be determined not by the position he filled, but the manner in which he filled it, whatever it might be; the sacrifices he made, whatever they were. So in many cases the last shall be first and the first last.

So the poor Widow with her two mites may have in heaven a brighter crown than even rich Joseph of Arimathea, and Joseph of Arimathea may have a brighter

crown than some of those who preached the gospel to him. The sacrifices that seemed but little things in this world—only two mites—may be found great things in that; may be found to have really been in themselves comparatively great things here, and to be in their results infinitely greater there. But ah! we will not talk about sacrifices, for we make none in comparison with Christ, and we *have* none but in him; the great thing is to follow Christ, to have the sweet readiness to give up all to him. We will not undertake to compare the brightness of one crown and another, though it be true that one star differeth from another star in glory; but we will strive to gain the crown at any rate.

SEE THAT NO MAN TAKE THY CROWN.

CHAPTER XIX.

The calling of Philip, and Philip's work upon Nathaniel.—The social power and impulse of Christianity.—Desirableness of Love to Christ as the reigning feature in the character.

We proceed in our investigation. "The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." In considering this comprehensive notice, it is of some importance to determine our localities. At this time, as we have seen, Jesus was at Bethabara on or near the river Jordan, some thirty miles east from Jerusalem. John, Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel were all at the same time in this same village, having gathered thither as attendants of John's ministry, and with the feeling that the time for the coming of the Messiah was drawing nigh. Bethsaida and Bethabara were some sixty miles apart, Bethabara on the Jordan being between sixty and seventy miles south from Galilee and the Sea or Lake of Tiberias, where, at Bethsaida, most of these disciples had their residence. They had travelled all this distance from that village, to attend upon the teachings, or partake in the baptism of John, perhaps moved by an inward impulse like that which directed the wise men of the East in pursuit of the new-born King of the Jews.

Our Blessed Lord had already called Peter, Andrew,

and John, and made them familiar with his residence and himself, this being the morning after their first sacred interview with him. They had been his guests the preceding night, as it would seem, having abode with him, because it was so late in the day when they entered his dwelling. And now this morning they were all to set out with Christ on a journey back into Galilee, from which region they had all come, in attendance on John's baptism. They were not now to follow Christ as his apostles and commissioned ministers, but were first to return back for a season to their usual occupations.

Before leaving Bethabara for Galilee, Jesus found Philip, another of John's disciples, who had likewise come down from Bethsaida with the same purpose as the others, to enjoy more of the instructions of John, and if possible to discover the Messiah. Philip, Andrew, and Peter were fellow-townsmen, and had probably been in habits of intimacy from their childhood. They seem to have been of the same occupation, and they had evidently received the same education in the sacred Scriptures, and in the lessons of the temple and the synagogue, common to the nation. They were fishermen of Bethsaida, on the borders of the lovely sea of Galilee. In their study of, and acquaintance with, the law and the prophets, and by the providential discipline and grace of God, they were alike prepared for the revelation of the Messiah. They had been now led, by Divine Providence, to Bethabara, for this very purpose, that there they might meet the Lord Jesus; and for this very purpose Christ himself had come to Bethabara at this time, to show himself to those who were prepared for him, to receive particularly these disciples from John's instructions, and to return with them into their native province, where, on the borders of their native lake, he would afterwards give them their final call to the ministry.

But there was yet another to be gathered, and Philip himself was to begin his own missionary work by gathering him. Nathaniel was of the village of Cana of Galilee,

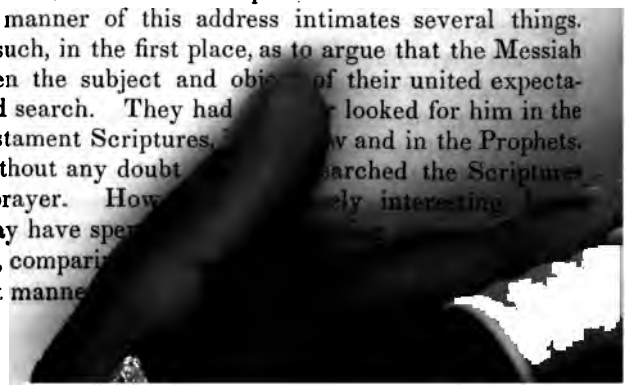
a town about fifteen miles from Bethsaida, between the lake of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea, and about ten miles north from Nazareth. Nathaniel was an acquaintance and friend of Philip, and probably likewise of Andrew, Peter, and John. By the same heavenly impulse with which Andrew, the preceding day, went in search of Peter, Philip now, this morning, before setting out for Galilee, went in search of Nathaniel. Christ was now gathering his disciples, his Apostles, and it is remarkable with what a fervent spirit of love, and happy, holy, zealous labor, they set out. It does not appear that Christ gave Philip any special instructions on this point, but Philip's own heart led him. When our Lord told Philip that they must that day set out from Bethabara on their return to Galilee, Philip may have said, as Andrew did in the case of Peter, Lord, suffer me first to go and find Nathaniel. Having found the Messiah himself, he could not, would not, delay communicating the glad tidings to his friend from Cana.

All these men had come from Bethsaida and Cana to Bethabara, to be more fully instructed of John. They were fellow-students and disciples under John; they were to be so, likewise, under Christ. They were about the same age, nor is it likely that any of them were more than thirty. Having all come from Galilee, and three or four of them being fellow-townsmen, and united in the same occupation, they were intimate and enthusiastic in their opinions. They were evidently of the better class in Galilee, much above the ordinary character and attainments of their countrymen. And the great reason was, that their minds had been excited and drawn out in regard to the day of redemption for Israel; they had been studying the Word of God, and waiting on his law in the Temple, and looking and longing for the coming of the Messenger of the Covenant, the Desire of Nations. Now it matters little how much darkness and how many wrong views to be corrected, there may have existed, mingled

with these expectations; the excitement of their minds and the enkindling of their desires on this subject tended to raise their character. How often in the stillness of the cloudless nights on the lake of Galilee, beneath the moon and the stars, while they were busied in casting their nets, or in the intervals of quiet, they may have meditated on the rising of the promised Deliverer, and conversed about him, with hearts burning within them, and with desires increased by such communion, for the freedom of their country.

Among these four, the narrative indicates that Philip was particularly intimate in friendship with Nathaniel. It is very possible that they two may have come from Galilee in company; and therefore Philip would not leave Judea without Nathaniel, more especially as their object in coming must have been the same. And we may add to the remarks above made on the character of these disciples, that the endearing intimacy of such men as Philip and Nathaniel evidently were, from the testimony of Christ in regard to Nathaniel particularly, is itself proof of more than ordinary refinement, and may indicate high qualities both of feeling and of intellect. Philip's first mission, after finding Christ himself, was to find Nathaniel *for* Christ, to tell him *of* Christ. And his first declaration to Nathaniel was out of the Old Testament. We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph.

The manner of this address intimates several things. It was such, in the first place, as to argue that the Messiah had been the subject and obj[illegible] of their united expectation and search. They had [illegible] looked for him in the Old Testament Scriptures, [illegible]w and in the Prophets. And without any doubt [illegible]arched the Scriptures with prayer. How[illegible]ly interesting they may have spe[illegible] records, compari[illegible] or what manne[illegible]



noting also the signs of the times, especially since John began his remarkable mission and his baptism. How many hours they may have spent in prayer for light, and how many times they may have helped and encouraged each other in their investigations.

It would intimate also that the very object of their journey to Bethabara had been some indefinite expectation that Christ himself would or might even then and there appear. They thought he might come at any time. The whole people were in expectation of him, and began to muse in their hearts whether John himself were not the Christ. And now Philip comes to Nathaniel, crying, We have found him! we have found him! Him of whom Moses in the law, and the Prophets, did write; the same for whose coming we have watched, and searched, and waited for so long. It is He! There is no more doubt whatever in regard to it. It is not John, but He, whom John, by the Spirit of God, hath showed us.

And who was he, if not John? Who was it that John had pointed out as the Messiah, and that Philip was now resting upon with such unhesitating confidence, as indeed the Christ? The manner of Philip's address intimates also that Jesus himself was not unknown, at least by reputation, to both Philip and Nathaniel, even before this visit to Bethabara. We have found him, cried Philip, and it is Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. This mode of announcement indicates evidently that they had heard before of Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. There had already been something very remarkable in his character and acti[illegible] which had drawn the notice of the villages and [illegible]und about his native village upon [illegible]Jesus [illegible]h, the son of Joseph, was one, of [illegible]eard in Cana, and Philip in Beth- [illegible]p comes to Nathaniel with the [illegible]at the very Messiah, the [illegible]is Jesus of Nazareth, [illegible]em to have had the

least fear that his message would be disbelieved, that either his glad tidings would be doubted, or the manner of them be received with any incredulity; and so he makes no difficulty of announcing at once that the revealed Messiah is simply Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. This shows in a very vivid light, the greatness of Philip's faith, the complete, triumphant, unquestioning assurance in his own mind that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. And the manner in which the same conviction took possession of Nathaniel's soul, after he had also seen Christ, shows the same extraordinary power of faith in him. But upon the manner of Nathaniel's reception of the news we will not dwell any further at present, but will leave the whole company of these newly gathered, and fervently believing disciples with Christ, in their joyful, happy communion with him and with one another, drinking in his instructions. Meantime we proceed to gather up some of the lessons arising thus far out of our examination of their behavior.

There is here depicted the very soul and life of Christianity, in its loving, social, missionary, sympathizing spirit. These men had been struggling in the darkness, and now they saw the dawn and the bright day together. They had sympathized with each other in their fears, desires, perplexities, prayers, and now they thought of one another and not of themselves alone, when relief began to appear. They began to see the Sun of Righteousness arise, for whose appearance they had been watching at times all night long; and the first who beheld the light, ran to report it to the other. Its revelation to them was the very fulfilment of the promise with which the Old Testament closes, "Behold, I will send my Messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in. And unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow

up as calves of the stall." This was literally fulfilled, first of all, in these believing, fearing, loving disciples. And in them was fulfilled that other passage in the same prediction, where God says, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard: and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

This beautiful passage had its accomplishment first of all in these same disciples, that they might be to the glory of God, who first trusted in Christ. Even before Christ's manifestation to Israel they had feared the Lord, and thought upon his name, and spake often one to another, and in this humble, anxious, gentle, teachable, fearing frame, they had come to John, the messenger and forerunner of Christ, and now the Lord had claimed them as his own; now when he was beginning to make up his jewels, he received these jewels from John, as among the brightest in the crown.

These happy disciples were now united in conversion, and each one was made the instrument of blessing the other. Philip and Nathaniel, Andrew, Peter, and John, co-operated with Christ, and with the work of the Holy Spirit. It was a most delightful, simple, thorough, hearty work of Christian love. Friends began with friends, relatives with relatives. Presently we see the circle enlarging, but here it is small and distinctly visible. Each rising wave is apparent, and we see how it spreads, each circling ripple on the lake of love, before there are so many of them, and so vast and deep and widening, that we can no more trace them but as one common impulse, one grand heaving and waving in the mighty sea. In this simple early life of Christianity, every infant, missionary impulse of sympathy and love is visible, and can be counted. First come John, Andrew, and Peter, then Philip, then

Nathaniel; and then the wave that starts at Bethabara from the person of Christ, spreads all over Galilee and Judea, and then over the world. It is a Missionary wave, and here is the very life of Christianity, the very essence of discipleship, and the very way of the world's evangelization. Nothing can be more beautiful than the working of this principle of the socialism of grace, the social principle and power of Christianity. It is a sympathizing, impulsive, progressive, diffusive life. It is the leaven of the world, which will work till the whole is leavened. And it works, where it works at all, with an accumulating, accelerating tendency and power.

We learn, moreover, from this examination of the early conversion of the Apostles, the need of a preparation in the heart for the clear perception of the glory of the Redeemer's character, and for the hearty, cordial submission of the soul to him in affectionate confidence and obedience. It is evident beyond doubt that these disciples and apostles, to whom Christ was thus made known, were prepared for the revelation of him, and prepared to receive him with joy, by previous humiliation, discipline, study, and prayer. They were not plucked from carelessness and indifference as by a sudden miracle, just as if God had raised up children unto Abraham from the stones in the street. They were selected because there had been going on that previous, secret, unnoticed, unknown process of discipline with them, and of sacred anxiety in their minds and hearts. They had been religious inquirers, of a long time, and it was fit that the light should first fall upon them, as they were the nearest to it, and best prepared for it.

Nor were they illiterate men, as is commonly charged upon them, that is, ignorant, rude, rabble-men. But they were men, to a good degree, of cultivated minds, susceptible of strong friendships, and men of much refinement of the social qualities, not the refinement of the fashionable world in manners, but of the natural feelings, of true sim-

plicity of character, of happy family affection, and of pure morality. They were not coarse men, of hardened feelings and manners, but they were gentle in their character, though some of them impetuous, and they were regardful of each other's happiness; and in such respects they were truly refined, however incongruous we might regard the title of gentlemen as applied to them.

They were united in the study of God's Word. They were not ignorant of that which was the only source of true wisdom then on earth. And no man could have been called ignorant who was acquainted with the Scriptures, whatever of human learning might have been a blank. Their Scriptural learning alone would have kept them from grossness, and made them educated. Neither could any man or men have been, or been called, gross or hardened, who could at once see and appreciate, as they did, the beauty of our Blessed Lord's character, and the internal power of the evidence thence resulting of his being indeed the Messiah. The very fact of their intuitive perception of that evidence, their deep, all-subduing sense of the power of it, shows a quality of mind and character, a habit of discernment, a wisdom of the understanding, an illumination of the soul, far above that of the common multitude.

For it is to be remembered that they had no miracle to rest upon, but simply the sight of Jesus in his simplicity and lowliness, his benevolent meekness and love. But that sight carried away all their prejudices, and together with the testimony of John, the conversation of Jesus completely subdued and assured them. This would have been by no means so remarkable, had Christ wrought a great miracle on the spot, as he did a few days afterwards in Cana of Galilee, where many believed in him in consequence of that miracle. But here was no miracle. Had Christ chosen to work one, then without doubt a multitude among the crowd that were gathering after John might have flocked to Jesus, very few of whom, if any, would

have seen, as Andrew, Peter, John, Philip, and Nathaniel saw, the celestial and convincing glory and beauty of Christ's own character and conversation. But these men, becoming experimentally acquainted with Christ, began at once to feel that he was in himself a greater, more convincing miracle, in his own nature as God manifest in the flesh, than any miracle he himself could have wrought for their conviction. They came personally to Christ, and there was the end, as there always is, on such acquaintance, of all their hesitation and unbelief.

Now this was to them the greatest of all blessings, for heaven was opened to them in the face of Jesus Christ, and thenceforth they rested on him with an affectionate confidence, that nothing ever could or did diminish or shake. Their attachment was intense; indeed it was sublime, though so completely unawares and unostentatious; and the production and sustaining of it was a sublime and beautiful exhibition of the power of Christ's character, of the Saviour's infinite loveliness. No other being but he, could, under such circumstances, so have won and retained their affections. For he beat down all their pride, destroyed all the illusions they had entertained, all their fond hopes of a temporal deliverer, and preached to them plainly his own and their sufferings. He taught them that his kingdom was not of this world, but of heaven, not temporal but spiritual, not of ease and plenty here, but poverty and trial. He taught them that through much tribulation they must enter into that kingdom. He rebuked their prejudices, chastised their worldly expectations, and bade them take up the cross daily, and follow him. And yet, how fervently they loved him! It was the work of God's Spirit in their hearts, but it was developed thus strongly and at once, from the outset, in ardent love to Christ, because they had been disciplined and prepared beforehand, their hearts had been softened, and fitted by the spiritual influences of the Old Testament dispensation and Scriptures, to receive Christ's image, the

impress of his lovely character; and the Spirit of God made it shine and live within them.

Their hearts came to Christ through the devout paths of the law and the prophets, taught and led by them as their heavenly schoolmasters, and thus prepared, this constraining love of Christ became evermore the reigning feature in their characters. Desirable beyond expression it is, that such should always be the introduction of the soul to Christ, such and so clear the beholding and appreciation of the loveliness and glory of his character from the outset. Desirable beyond expression it is that the belief of the soul should not rest in any external evidence, either of miracles or anything else, but in Christ, in an experimental knowledge of him, in the individual, personal discovery of the truth of such a Saviour. The path of a soul that sets out thus, in, with, and from a lively attachment to Christ, will be (if this love continues, as it did, in the case of these early, interesting converts) a path shining more and more unto the perfect day. And indeed it is this personal absorbing love to Christ that we want greatly in our modern Christianity.

Furthermore, we remark it as a clear thing that *the call of Christ must be obeyed,* and men must come to him, or they cannot expect to be saved. The things connected with him, and with the salvation of the soul by him, must be the things of greatest, yea, of absorbing interest, to which men must be willing to give time, attention, study, and heart. If they are not ready to do this, they can expect no benefit from Christ. They cannot expect to be plucked against their own will from their occupations, and compelled into Christ's house, but they must come when invited, come to him, and follow him, and then shall they know, if they follow on to know, the Lord. These simple-hearted, interesting men, are examples. To find Christ, they of their own accord left their occupations, and it must have been at a costly sacrifice in their business, for they depended on that for their subsistence, and yet they

left all, and travelled with and after John the Baptist into Southern Judea, and there they were abiding in their pursuit after Christ, when Christ met them. Now such simple, sincere, earnest devotion to their great object, could not but be successful. It always is. And if half this holy diligence, this determined self-denying earnestness, were exercised by men now, in pursuit after Christ, never an individual would fail in finding him. But where is the man who would leave his worldly business for a week for the matter of his salvation, on grounds of such evidence as these blessed men went upon? Where is the man, who would leave his business for a week, and go to a distant part of the country, to attend the ministry of an Evangelist, from whom his soul might get some light respecting Christ? We accuse the Jews of hardness of heart and blindness of mind, but truly these Jews set us an example, which would to God the men of this day would follow. Would to God there were half the simplicity of heart in the multitude now that there was then! There must be this simplicity of devotion to the business of seeking Christ, or how can men be expected to find him?

And Oh! for that constant, childlike trust in the Redeemer, that ever follows this simple obedience to his call. Let the soul keep near him, that hath come to him. Let not that humble trust be spoiled by self-confidence, or choked by earthly weeds of vain desire. Let not the world creep back again into that heart, which has itself come out from the world to find and follow Christ. With the same earnestness with which you come to him, yea, and with a far more steady and sustained intensity of purpose, you are now to follow hard after him, and his right hand shall uphold you.

I thirst, but not as once I did,
  The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid
  That I should seek my pleasures there.

It was the sight of thy dear cross
  First weaned my soul from earthly things,
And taught me to esteem as dross
  The mirth of fools, and pomp of kings.

I want that grace that springs from Thee,
  That quickens all things where it flows,
And makes a wretched thorn like me
  Bloom as the myrtle or the rose.

Dear fountain of delight unknown!
  No longer sink below the brim,
But overflow, and pour me down
  A living and life-giving stream.

For sure, of all the plants that share
  The notice of thy Father's eye,
None proves less grateful to his care,
  Or yields him meaner fruit than I.

COWPER.

CHAPTER XX.

Philip and Nathaniel.—The voice of the Gospel and of Faith, Come and See!

NATHANIEL'S answer to Philip, and Philip's rejoinder to Nathaniel, are natural and beautiful. They are the conversation, in effect, between an inquiring mind, beset with difficulty, and the Word of God in the Gospel, Come and see! Nathaniel said unto Philip, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

We have traced the introduction of John, Peter, Andrew, and Philip to the acquaintance of our Blessed Lord, and their instrumentality, so affectionate and delightful, in each other's spiritual illumination. The circle now widens, and takes in a fifth in the number of those disciples, whom our Blessed Lord, after calling and training them for the work of the ministry, would appoint as Apostles. The process, as it proceeds, is still more interesting.

Nathaniel was a man of great integrity and true simplicity of character. The description given of him by our Lord is truly wonderful, considered as pronounced upon a mortal by him who trieth the reins and searcheth the heart. Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! That is, Behold a humble, and believing mind, a man of a contrite, upright spirit, who trembleth at God's Word, and is waiting and longing for the consolation of Israel, even like

Simeon in the Temple. It was the description of a true Christian, a man who lived by faith, although the Redeemer had not yet been made known to him, a just man, who waited upon God, and on whose path God was shining. And God's light shone upon him in answer to prayer, for Nathaniel was a man of prayer. He had been engaged in prayer just before Philip found him. There was a retired place beneath the thick broad shade of a spreading fig-tree, where he, and in all probability sometimes Philip with him, was accustomed in secret to pour out his soul before God, or to meditate, Isaac-like, at evening-tide, and think upon his country and its redemption. It was there that Philip found Nathaniel. It was there, at this early hour in the morning, before setting out for Galilee, that he went first of all to seek him, there in the place of prayer.

> The calm retreat, the silent shade,
> With prayer and praise agree,
> And seem by thy sweet bounty made,
> For those who worship Thee.

Sweet indeed, under Oriental climes, are such retirements for the worship of God.

Nathaniel was prepared by his communion with God for an interview with Christ, for the sight and assurance of his Divine character, and for the hearty reception of his grace, as the soul's only Saviour. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him." God had been drawing Philip, and now he was drawing Nathaniel. He had been drawing them both, by his Word, and preparing them, by the earnest, humble study of the prophets and the law, to behold him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write. He had been drawing and preparing them by his Spirit and with his Word, and Philip had found Christ, and this was the day in which Christ was to be revealed to Nathaniel, and the revelation was made in answer to prayer. In prayer Nathaniel had

been drawing nigh to God; in prayer the eye of the Omniscient Saviour had been fixed upon him. Jesus beheld him under the fig-tree, and as it was said of Saul, Behold he prayeth, go therefore, and disclose to him his Lord, so now of Nathaniel, Behold he prayeth; and Philip's own heart, under the guidance of the Spirit of God and at the word of Christ, led him to Nathaniel praying, to tell him of the Saviour. It is interesting and instructive to trace these introductory steps, this introductory discipline.

But Nathaniel's first exclamation is that of apparent incredulity. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? "We have found him," said Philip, "of whom Moses in the law, and the Prophets did write. We have certainly found him. And whom do you think it can be? None other than Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph!" Nathaniel evidently did not expect such an announcement as this. He partook of the common prejudice against Nazareth, and remembered and felt that prejudice at once, when Jesus of Nazareth was mentioned. But notwithstanding that, he made no further objection than was contained in his question. And the fact that this prejudice existed in his mind so strongly, sets more strikingly in view the greatness of the faith, by which afterwards, on the sight of Christ himself, he overcame it.

Philip entered into no argument with him; he was too much in haste to bring him immediately to Christ. He knew that the knowledge of Christ personally would do for him what it had done for himself, remove all difficulty, and fix his heart. He cared nothing about his objections, so he could but get him to Christ, for that, he knew, would clear up all. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Come and see, answered Philip; only come and see! There was a triumphant gladness and haste in Philip's manner. It was the gladness of an assurance without doubt in his own mind; it was the triumph of faith in a heart that had found its resting-place, and felt that it could convert the whole world, could it only bring the world to

Christ. Come and see, said Philip, that's all. No time now to discuss our difficulties. Jesus is going to-day to Galilee. Come and see! So he laid hold upon him and hurried him away to Christ.

Now the Blessed Saviour had seen all this; seen Nathaniel under the fig-tree, seen Philip coming to him, seen with delight the happy zeal of his disciples. And now he beheld Nathaniel coming, and to show him that he knew him, he said, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathaniel, astonished at this announcement, said to him, Whence knowest thou me? He had never met with Jesus, whatever he might have heard said in Galilee concerning the son of Joseph, and he knew that he himself was unknown personally to Jesus. And he knew not what to make of this declaration. But Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, *when thou wast under the fig-tree*, I saw thee. Nathaniel, convinced by this manifestation of supernatural knowledge on the part of the being before him, and powerfully affected at the appeal to his own thoughts, to the exercises of his soul in secret prayer, felt at once that Philip's message to him was the truth, and that he had indeed found the Messiah. The image of all that his soul had been seeking after, all that had been revealed and foreshadowed in the Scriptures, rose up before him, and he saw in Christ realized the idea of that Being, of whose nature, form, glory, and character he had been striving to gain a more definite conception and knowledge. He was convinced at once; his doubts and difficulties vanished; he felt somewhat as the two disciples did, when the risen Saviour was made known to them in the breaking of bread. It was the Messiah, the Anointed of God! It was he, whom his soul had been seeking, he whom God had promised to Israel. He felt it, he knew it, he surrendered his whole soul to the rapturous conviction. And he answered and said unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel!

Had not Nathaniel been indeed the Israelite without guile, as our Lord had described his character, his faith would not have been thus unhesitating. But to the upright there ariseth a light in the darkness. Nathaniel had come to the light, and believed in the light, for his heart was seeking light, and was open to conviction, and this was a great declaration of his faith, greater perhaps, and more explicit than any disciple had as yet attained to. And thereupon followed the approving smile and welcome of his Saviour. For Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.—This was the close of the present interview, or rather, this is all that is recorded of the present conversation; a conversation, however, which doubtless was continued in much greater detail than we have any account of.

They were now to set out with Christ from Bethsaida, all these five disciples, John, Peter, Andrew, Philip, and Nathaniel, leaving John the Baptist still baptizing in Jordan, and teaching the people concerning the kingdom of heaven. It was a happy journey after this, their journey back into Galilee. How constantly, and with what deep earnestness and interest would they converse by the way! What sacred instruction would our Blessed Lord pour into their minds, or cause to distil softly like the dew upon them, as they were able to bear it. We know his method of teaching, so familiar, so illustrative, so simple. Every incident, by the way-side, every aspect of nature, every homely, well-known truth of the physical world, he would draw into spiritual wisdom. Beneath the clear sun of Judea, amidst the ripening corn fields and luxuriant vineyards, they travelled towards Galilee. They were to stop at Cana, and there the Saviour was to manifest the first outshining demonstration of his glory to the public eye; a

demonstration, however glorious, yet far inferior to that, which these dear disciples were now enjoying daily. But we leave them for the present, and return to gather up some of the lessons presented in the conversion of Nathaniel.

And first, all that we have previously said concerning the elevated character of the disciples finds here a corroboration. Nathaniel was evidently a man of prayer, a student of the Scriptures, a devout man, a man of refinement of feeling. The character given of him by our Blessed Lord is such, that no man who possessed it could fail of being a man held in high estimation by his countrymen and those who knew him. He was unquestionably a man of education and respectability. The piety of his mind and life was such, that Christ himself remarked it. It must therefore have been uncommon and peculiar; but it was altogether of grace, acting upon a childlike, natural substratum of character, and preparing it for the Saviour's kingdom. The disciples were all thus fitted for his service. They were not chosen at hazard, as it were, from the rough material of human nature, but they had been in training by the Spirit and the Word of God for years. And they were all selected, likewise, for particular natural, but varied features of character, which, under the dominion of grace, would be developed for the glory of the Saviour in advancing his kingdom. If Nathaniel's character was thus remarkable, we are to remember also that Philip was evidently his near, dear, intimate friend, and therefore of some similarity of character, taste, and attainments. A man is known by his company, and next to the testimony of Christ himself as to Nathaniel's great excellence, would be the assurance, as to Philip, that he was beloved of Nathaniel, the intimate friend of Nathaniel. We are justified in supposing that both these men were men of rare excellence of character.

And though they were men of genuine simplicity of nature, they were also men of quick discernment, and not

to be imposed upon. They saw the evidence of Christ's divinity at once, and felt, and rested upon it. They saw in a moment that he was no pretender, nor any ambitious, or ostentatious, or presuming leader, but the genuine heavenly glory of his character shone with power upon their understandings and hearts. Children, and men of true simplicity of mind, are the quickest intuitive judges of character in the world. Perhaps such persons may not be able to trace the process by which they come to a conclusion, but the conclusion is almost always right. They form their opinion often at first sight, but it is unerring. Philip and Nathaniel were guided not only by their natural intuitive simplicity and frankness of disposition, but they had been imbued with the knowledge of the Scriptures, were men of prayer, and were taught of the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, we see here the power of faith, the power of personal experience, in surmounting difficulties. All Philip's difficulties had been removed by his interview with Christ. But it was not certain that another mind would view the thing exactly as he did, though he felt sure that Nathaniel would form the same judgment as himself. Still, it was an experiment, and we may conceive of Philip's joy at the sight of the effect of the knowledge of Christ upon Nathaniel. We are so constituted that one Christian soul is always much impressed by the experience of another; there is great sympathy, great encouragement; and hence the salutary power of good religious biographies. Rightly used, they are next to the Bible. Philip's faith was very strong, but we may be sure it was still stronger when he saw that Nathaniel felt just as he did, viewed the Saviour just as he did. It was just what he expected when he said to Nathaniel so triumphantly, Come and see.

And we may conceive of him as afterwards delightfully reminding Nathaniel of his first incredulity. Well! and what do you think of Jesus of Nazareth now? he would say to him. No matter, Nathaniel would answer, whether

he be of Nazareth, or Capernaum, or Samaria itself. I know not and care not; I have seen him, and known him, and am satisfied. One thing I know, that he hath opened mine eyes, and whereas I was blind, now I see; I see him and his glory, the Lord of my soul, the Son of God, the Messenger of the Covenant, my King, my Redeemer, him of whom Moses in the law, and the Prophets did write.

This is always the effect of genuine spiritual experience, the effect of the assurance of the soul, produced by seeing Christ in faith, and feeling his preciousness. This is evidence that can stand against all the malignant powers in the universe arrayed against it; evidence, against which neither the gates of hell nor the temptations of Satan can ever prevail. There may have been a thousand difficulties unanswered. There may be conceived a thousand more, even under this assurance; difficulties, with which the soul could not at present grapple, should it try. But this experimental assurance in the sight of Christ is proof against them all. This experimental assurance makes them all wait, till that light and explanation, which the soul knows will come, shall come, and makes them *quietly* wait, without troubling the soul. This experimental assurance, produced by the Spirit and the Word of God, is knowledge of the highest kind. It is like the intuition of truths which you cannot prove. Nothing can shake the soul.

There were a great many difficulties, which Philip and Nathaniel had to propose, and which they would have had to settle, had they stopped with difficulties, instead of coming to Christ, and which, nevertheless, they never could have settled except by coming to Christ. For example, this very matter of Christ being of Nazareth would have been an insurmountable difficulty, if not explained. If Nazareth were the birth-place of Jesus, and so it seems to have been reputed, how could he possibly be the Messiah, since the Scripture had said that Christ should come of the seed of David, and out of the town of

Bethlehem. This question itself afterwards made a great division among the people. But the direct way to settle it was to come to Christ, and to Christ Philip and Nathaniel came with all their questions.

Now it is clear that this is the only successful course, the only course of true wisdom, and of life and salvation, for any and every soul. Philip's voice to Nathaniel, Come and see, is the voice at once both of common sense and of the gospel. And yet men act on this subject very much as if they had with one common determination agreed, when they come to the business of religion, to throw all common sense away from them. On all other subjects they make experiment. They talk much of their Baconian philosophy, how wonderful a creature is man, who gathers facts and makes experiments before he will believe; how wonderful an advance in science the great Anglo-Saxon princes of the earth have made in discarding mere theories, and basing all their conclusions on the inductive system of facts and experiments. And indeed in earthly things, in this matter, men are consistent with their experimental philosophy. If a man intends to buy five yoke of oxen, he will go and prove them. If he is to take shares in a coal mine, he will examine the coal and the indications of the veins. If he is buying stocks, he will see to his securities. If he is buying flour, and has reason to fear it is adulterated, he will prove it, and make sure. If he is called to put faith in a system of astronomy, he will have that demonstrated by experiment. If he is to take passage in a ship, he will see for himself what the ship is. You would not find him engaging in a discussion concerning the very existence of the ship, without going to see it. But in religion men are fools, are madmen. The last thing they do is that which ought to be the first, the experiment. They will discuss the evidences of religion, when they have never attempted the personal experiment with one of them. They will question and doubt and hesitate and argue, and swing pendulum-like

between belief and disbelief in regard to a matter in which the only possible way of determining the truth is to make personal experiment.

Religion, in its very essence, is a thing of *trial*, not merely of evidence; and all the evidence in the world will not convince a man without the trial. If a man is not willing to make the trial, he will remain unconvinced, till experience convinces him by his eternal ruin. He will know the value of the soul, by the soul's eternal loss. Religion must be a matter of original, individual, we might almost say lonely experiment. The awakening step may be evidence, *must* be evidence of some kind, but the conviction and conversion are experience; the coming to Christ and the assurance of his mercy and grace are experience. A careless man strays into the house of God, and hears an awakening pungent sermon from Richard Baxter. He hears of things, which, if true, are adapted to distress him; and it is *evidence* to which he is listening. He is awakened at first on the evidence of the preacher. But this is not belief. This evidence is given, is applied, is spread before him, to induce him to make the trial for himself, to induce him to come and see. He hears that he is lost, that Christ can save him, and only Christ, and that he must go to Christ in penitence and prayer. He may be alarmed, but until he goes to Christ, he cannot tell for a certainty, from his own experience, the truth of the preaching; unless indeed he believe with the heart in God's Word, which no man does with his heart, but by going to Christ. He must make this experiment.

He might spend his life in arguing whether the things of the preaching are true; but if he will go himself to Christ, he can tell at once. Let him come and see. He may think nothing good can come out of Nazareth; let him come and see. But if he judges beforehand, he judges against evidence, and in the contempt and neglect of evidence. It is evidence which God has graciously given him, to induce him to make the experiment; evidence

abundant, evidence enough for any sane mind; and the experiment itself is so simple, so easy, that he need not waste nor hazard anything, nor lose either time or well-being in making it. Conscience goes with the evidence, so that it is evidence within as well as without. Everything calls on him to make the experiment. If now he does not make it, he must abide the consequences; he chooses the alternative, and chooses all the results that wait on the alternative, of not making it; and the loss and the ruin are his own.

Without coming to Christ and seeing him for ourselves, there is plenty of room for cavilling, distrusting, arguing, and theorizing; but there is no possibility of religion in experience, in exercise, in possession. The religion of the gospel is neither a succession from the apostles, nor a diploma in the church, but a life in Christ; and such a thing as piety there cannot be, neither in the church nor out of it, but by a personal acquaintance with Christ. There may be knowledge, but not experience, not love.

A man may dwell in the porch of the temple all his life long, and never see the interior. A man may be employed upon the external evidences all his life long, and may array and combine them with great power, and yet never possess that indispensable article of personal experience, to which they are intended to lead, and without which they are worthless. A man may even be delighted with the logic, the symmetry, the fulness and minuteness of the demonstration, may be charmed as a reasoner, may eloquently descant upon the power of the evidences of our religion, and yet know nothing of the power of the religion itself. The personal religion is a thing totally separate from the external evidence. The evidence may lead to it, may be an introduction into it, but is no part of the thing itself, of the personal experience. There was a long row of sphinxes in Egypt, leading to the great temple of Karnak in Thebes, but the sphinxes were not the temple. A man might walk up and down the sphinxes for

years, and never enter into the temple. So with the introductory evidences of religion. And a man might get within the temple of Karnak, without going through the line of sphinxes; nay, a stranger might do this, coming from the desert side, without ever having even heard of them. He might be in the temple first, and see the sphinxes afterwards; might go from the temple into the midst of the sphinxes, instead of coming through the sphinxes into the temple.

So it is with true piety. A man may come to Christ, without ever having so much as heard of the evidences that he is the Christ, while another man may walk up and down amidst those evidences, and consider and admire them, and yet never come to Christ at all, nor even know him as a Saviour. A man may come to Christ first, and enter into the evidences afterwards, or he may come through the evidences to Christ; albeit he can never truly, fully, see and feel their power till he comes to Christ, and sees everything in Christ's light, everything as leading to Christ. A soul may be deeply imbedded in the Saviour, and yet know nothing of the train of argument by which he is proved to *be* the Saviour. A soul may come to Christ, and take all its evidence from him, first and alone. And this is certainly the highest style of faith, the most unassailable faith, the most powerful faith. Now we believe, not for the saying of the woman, but because we have seen him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ which should come into the world.

All the mightiest array of evidences is for the mind but wood, hay, and stubble, if the heart come not to Christ. Philip and Nathaniel, John, Peter, and Andrew, might rise from the dead and repeat their story, but it could not bless or benefit men, who come not themselves to Christ. And men may perish even with the testimony of the dead and living before them, the Word of God for themselves, and the work of the Spirit in others; they may perish, even like a ship brought by her pilot to the very mouth of the

harbor, and there thrown upon the rocks. No advantages can prosper any soul, if it go not to Christ, but the very exaltation to heaven may cast a man down to hell. Evidences, churches, fathers, apostolical successions, baptisms, all are but so much useless lumber, or burning condemnation, to the soul that does not go to Christ.

Multitudes of souls walk up and down the avenue of Christian Faith, and admire it, but never enter the Christian temple nor behold Christ. Suppose a man were asked, Did you ever go into the Cathedral of St. Peter's? and he should answer, No, but I lived for years where I could see the dome. The proximity of the man's residence would be but an exasperation of his ignorance. Just so it is with the gospel. Men live for years in sight of it, but never come near it, never try it. But alas! the nearer the temple in this life, the further from God in the next, if your privileges, your light, your knowledge, have not brought you to the Saviour. Did you come to Christ amidst all these avenues of mercy? No, but we have eaten and drunk in his presence, and he has taught in our streets. Alas, what good will that do you, when you stand in judgment before him, to answer for your treatment of his offers of salvation?

Did you come to Christ, did you know Christ, did your soul love him, and trust in him, and obey him? No, but I was a child of the kingdom, by right and title from Abraham, I had all the privileges of the Christian dispensation, I worshipped with a church that held succession from the apostles, nay, and I was myself a member of the same, I lived beneath the light of the gospel, and was never a poor miserable heathen. I tell you, says our Saviour, that they shall come from the east and the west and the north and the south into the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom, they whose right it was, if they would only have received it, they who lived in it on earth, but disregarded it, shall be cast out. If external privileges and ordinances are all that men have to rest upon, then they

have no Saviour. John Newton's Hymn on Moonlight is a good representation of the ritual and sentimental piety that separates the mind from God and starves the heart.

The moon has but a borrowed light,
A faint and feeble ray;
She owes her beauty to the night,
And hides herself by day.
No cheering warmth her beam conveys,
Though pleasing to behold;
We might upon her brightness gaze
And perish still with cold.

Just such is all the light to man
Which reason can impart;
It cannot show one object plain,
Nor warm the frozen heart.
Thus moonlight views of truth divine
To many fatal prove:
For what avails in gifts to shine,
Without the light of love?

The gospel, like the sun at noon,
Affords a glorious light;
Then fallen reason's boasted moon
Appears no longer bright.
And grace, not light alone, bestows,
But adds a quickening power;
The desert blossoms like the rose,
And sin prevails no more.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Creed of Doubt.

It was deep midnight on the lake of Tiberias, and there was a storm in the darkness. The lonely ship into which Jesus had put the disciples, while he went up into a mountain to spend some hours in prayer, was out amidst the waters tossed and struggling with the tempest. But there need have been no fear for that, so long as Jesus had sent them into the midst of it. He would be sure to be with them, and accordingly in the depths of the tempestuous night, he, whose eye had been upon them, whose heart had been wrestling for them in prayer, came to them walking on the sea, the troubled sea. They should have rejoiced at this sight, but they were more troubled at it than the sea itself. That majestic form, radiant in the darkness, coming to the ship, terrified them more than the tempest, so that they cried out for fear. The appearance of incarnate divine holiness and goodness is sometimes more terrible to men distressed with sin than darkness and tempest. With what gentle kindness did Jesus reassure them! Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid. Then Peter, in one of his sudden impulses of mingled faith and self-confidence, determined to try an experiment. Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the water. And he said come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when

he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, he cried saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him, and saith unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

We have already dwelt upon the early manifestation of strong faith in Christ on the part of these disciples. We have also in a former chapter noted the nature of their prayer, Lord, increase our faith, and we have seen how little at that time they really knew what faith was. We have now before us a particular example of the trial of their faith by the Divine Wisdom and Love of the Redeemer. In the deeply interesting account of this storm upon the sea, we have the practical position of the disciples after near two years of discipline and teaching on the part of our Blessed Lord. We have a most instructive instance of the workings both of faith and doubt; an example of the wavering or oscillation of the soul between these two states of belief and unbelief, and the consequent practical effects of such alternating and diverse experience. Let us examine this unbelief of Peter, or rather this mixture of faith and unbelief, and learn what it teaches.

There was a mixture of faith and doubt. *If it be the Lord,* Peter said within himself, I care for nothing, I can do everything. Only let me be assured that it is he. But our Blessed Lord had just told Peter with all the disciples, that it *was* he. IT IS I, BE NOT AFRAID. Christ himself had spoken, and what greater evidence could Peter have, or ought he to ask for, than Christ's own word, and that evidence itself accompanied by a miraculous work announcing the Lord of the creation? And yet, Peter did not believe. Lord, *if* it be thou. It *is* I, said Christ. Lord, if it *be* thou, said Peter, bid me come to thee on the water. A singular mixture both of faith and unbelief. Lord, if it *be* thou! As much as to say, Lord, I doubt thy word, or rather, I doubt *the* word, whether it may not be a demon that has spoken; nevertheless, if it be indeed Christ,

I am afraid of nothing. Only give me evidence. Now assuredly this asking for more evidence under these circumstances, was the fruit of unbelief. It was the first stage of Peter's unbelief in this instance.

Then there was the second. Our Blessed Lord vouchsafed the sign which Peter required, or rather which Peter's unbelief required. He gave him the new evidence which he asked, by bidding him come. And now for an instant, strengthened by such extraordinary encouragement, Peter's faith gets the uppermost, and he gets down over the side of the ship, even in the midst of the tempest, and begins to walk on the water to go to Jesus. But he only took a step or two, when he began to be frightened, even at his own courage. And when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid. But did he not see the wind boisterous before he stepped out of the ship? What was there to prevent his continuing the enterprise, that there had not been to prevent his engaging in it? He had faith enough to set out, but not enough to persevere. And yet the arguments for persevering, and the reasons for encouragement, grew stronger at every step. The sea did not open to swallow him up, though he had ventured the experiment of walking on it. And if he could take but two steps without sinking, this was an immeasurably greater addition to his evidence that Christ was there, and it ought to have inspired him with such courage, that he would have been ready, even in the darkness of midnight, to walk alone, at Christ's word, across the whole Lake of Tiberias, even in the storm.

But even after this wonderful and successful experiment, his doubts returned. Or rather this time it was his fears that mastered him, and sunk his faith. This second unbelief was greater than the first. Assured by double evidence that it was Christ, and having his Lord's express command to come, he should have been afraid of nothing. Though Satan himself had risen up in bodily shape before him, he should have kept on. It was more his duty to

persevere, than it had been to begin. In fact, it required less faith to persevere than it did to begin. For all the grounds of faith were strengthened, every moment. The very fact that he did not sink was enough.

And mark this point. If Peter's attention had continued fixed on Christ, he *would* have persevered, nay, he would have seen nothing to be afraid of. But his attention being drawn away from Christ to the strong wind, Satan had the advantage of him; all his unbelief came over him again, and down he sank like lead in the waters. A heart without faith is always like lead, and sinks to the bottom. But faith is buoyant; it is as a life-preserver; and while it is whole and strong, he who has it cannot, will not sink. Peter believing had seen Christ, and the waves and the wind went for nothing; Peter losing sight of Christ, saw nothing but the waves and the wind, and sank instantly.

Thus, how often do men begin a work for Christ, and stop short in it for want of faith! They begin it perhaps in the exercise of a faith and an ardor like Peter's, but when they see the wind and the waves boisterous they begin to sink. Although the Lord upholds them at first setting out, their faith fails afterwards. This is he that received seed by the way-side, he that heareth the Word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he no root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth, by and by he is offended. It is a great thing to persevere. Add to your faith—patience. That the trial of your faith, though it be much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. A man ought not to set out in any enterprise, but by faith in Christ; but being set out by faith, in faith he ought to continue. Methinks the whole world might be likened to a great sea, in which are many ships and boats, and Jesus walking on the water, and everywhere men getting down out of their ships to go to him. Some persevere, but the greater part are sinking.

Faith holds out with some, but with the greater part the winds and waves conquer. And a great many who seem to be exercising faith, and getting down out of their ships to go to Jesus, do it not, but keep themselves secretly attached by a rope to the ship, not trusting all to Christ, not even beginning to trust, not cutting loose from everything. If Peter's experiment of faith had been made with a rope round his waist, he could not have taken a single step. But there was real faith in Peter at first, and a hearty committal of everything to Christ, though afterwards unbelief conquered. *If it be thou,* is the Creed of doubt.

This unbelief of Peter is contrasted strongly with his impetuous faith at a more advanced stage in his Christian experience. Then, when he only *heard* that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat, and cast himself at once into the sea to go to Jesus, asking no questions, giving way to no doubts. A contrast, which shows strikingly how the evidence of Christianity depends on the state of mind and heart in the individual to whom it is presented, and at the time *when* it is presented. The evidence which Peter had at first, and rejected, was incomparably greater than that on which he afterwards acted without any hesitation. A vast amount of evidence may fail to convince an unbelieving mind, when a hundredth part of it will produce assurance in a humble mind, disposed to receive it. When the evidence of the Scriptures is rejected, it is rejected by unbelief, not by reasoning; and indeed unbelief is the most unreasoning and unreasonable thing in the world. Unbelief reasons by sense, and therefore sinks in error. Peter reasoned by sense, and sank, like a thing of sense. He reasoned by the winds and waves, and left out of view the great ground and assurance of all reasoning. If he had reasoned aright, he would have argued within himself that the same Saviour, who had made him walk two steps upon the water without sinking, could and would make him walk the whole distance safely. But instead of this,

he deserted Christ, and his own experience, and all the true grounds of reasoning by faith, and argued with his own heart concerning the winds and waves, and so he found himself sinking.

Now this state of mind is just an example of that which may be often seen in unconverted persons, and in those who are Christians. Sometimes Satan has had such long and successful power in blinding the mind and hardening the heart, that a sinful man, even when convinced of sin, and looking about anxiously for deliverance, will not even believe so far as to pray, or if he does attempt it, says only, Lord, *if* it be thou! *If* the things of the Bible are true, *if* I must be regenerated in order to be saved, show it to me, that I may believe. Which is as much as to say, Lord, if thou art not false, if God be not a liar, and if his word is not a great fable and falsehood, show it to me, and then I will believe. This state of mind may be more common than we are apt to imagine. But what would be thought of the insolence of a poor ragged man, whom the Queen of England should meet at the gate of the palace, and promise to bestow upon him a costly gift, if he would go to a certain place and accomplish a piece of work; and he should say, I suspect you of lying in all this, and must have your note of hand, together with a certificate that you are the Queen of England whom you pretend to be; and on condition that you give me this demonstration, I will go! Such is, in fact, the language of an unbelieving heart towards God and Christ. It will not take God's Word, and act accordingly. It will not, on God's simple authority, make the experiment which God requires. The soul has God's own word, in which he has set forth both the terms of salvation and the necessity of it, both the character of the sinner and the character of Christ, and yet it is not content with this evidence, and will not act on these grounds. But God hath said, He that believeth not the record that God gave of his Son, hath made him a liar.

Now suppose an unconverted person, encompassed by such doubts, and distracted by his unbelief, as Peter was by the winds and waves around him. Suppose such an one finding himself sinking, and not beholding Christ, seeing, in fact, nothing real but his own darkness, doubt, almost atheism and despair. What is the duty of such an unconverted person in such a state? Assuredly, to treat those doubts as the work of him who is a liar from the beginning, and to confess them and mourn over them as sinful, and to ask the forgiveness of God. It is every man's duty to submit to God's evidence. It is every man's duty to make trial, crying out, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief. If a man does this sincerely and perseveringly, he is sure to be successful. Let him come confessing his sin, his darkness, his blindness, and crying out, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean, and there is no question that light will spring up within him, and there will be experience of the mercy of Christ in submissiveness, in peace, in the assurance of pardon.

There was one, of whom an account is given in the gospel, who came to Christ in this state of unbelief to gain his interposition in behalf of a beloved child. The man seems to have regarded our Saviour with a half suspicion of his being an impostor. His mode of address to him was this: Lord, if thou art able to do anything. He was not only ignorant of the glorious character of our Blessed Lord, but there seems to have been absolute scepticism, so that his application was a sort of despairing venture of unbelief, just as he might have come to a quack doctor in a last resort. Nothing could be done in such a state of mind. The Lord answered him therefore, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. This seems to have brought about an entirely new state of feeling, in the mind of the applicant. It threw him upon the state of his own heart in regard to Christ, and made him suddenly see and feel that in order to be saved by Christ, in order to gain his merciful interposition, there

must be a true reliance upon him on his own part. He must come throwing everything upon Christ, with a submissive hearty confidence in his power and willingness to save. This conviction, and his intensity of feeling in behalf of his child, working together, threw him into a paroxysm of mingled faith and doubt, desire and despair, to put an end to which, making a great effort to cast everything, as he should do, upon Christ, he cried out with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.

And an excellent prayer and a great triumph of faith over unbelief was that. When a man comes to that heartily, the difficulty is at an end. For faith once really commenced, is a growing principle. It may be as a grain of mustard seed at first in the soul, but it shall grow and spread, till it becomes like a strong overshadowing tree. That despairing application for Christ's mercy is worth everything, despairing, we mean, of self, and self-healing, and throwing all upon Christ. This now had become the man's only resort. His sudden discovery of his own weakness and unbelief became as sudden a source of strength, in throwing himself upon Christ's strength. This was doubtless the beginning of an entirely new life in the soul of this man, an entirely different and superior experience. And so it is always. The experience of divine things is as different from mere speculation, as life is different from death; it is no more to be understood by mere speculation than life is to be understood by counting the bones of a skeleton, or tracing the nerves.

And now, wherever there be a soul struggling to get to Christ, let that soul learn a lesson from Peter. If you would get to Christ, you must fix your eye, your mind, your heart, your whole purpose upon him. You must not mind winds, waves, tempests, but through them all make your way straight and steadfast to Christ. Sometimes Satan raises a storm at once, when he sees a soul getting down out of the ship of self and of this world to go to Christ, and if you are terrified by such a storm, whether

inward or external, and lose sight of Christ, you will sink. But step on boldly. Fix your eye, your heart, on Christ, and then every step, though it were upon Satan's own fires, will be a victory. You may walk through fire and tempest unscathed, looking only to Christ. But if you look away from Christ to the fire, it will burn you; to the winds and waves, they will swallow you up. Look to Christ, step forward to Christ, and Satan can do nothing; all his diabolical agencies will be baffled.

But sometimes Satan creates a calm around the soul which he sees getting down out of the ship, anxious, convinced of sin, and ready to flee to Christ. Take care of that. Beware lest Satan lull you, and make your purpose itself lukewarm, your heart secure, away from Christ. There is no safety for you, till you get to him. You should fear quietness more than an inward tempest, away from him.

> For more the treacherous calm I dread,
> Than tempests bursting o'er my head.

Let nothing, neither calm nor tempest, keep you away from Christ. And let nothing, either of darkness or doubt, interrupt your confidence in Him, for he is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. While darkness and doubt may well make you distrustful of self, and prevent you from leaning to your own understanding, they should drive you to Christ, as the only Author and Source of everlasting truth and certainty.

A man who gives way to doubt in divine things and suffers himself to be mastered by it, acts more like a brute or insane person than a rational creature. He rejects clear and positive evidence, unanswerable argument, and permits his conduct to be determined by doubt. This is somewhat as if in a deliberative assembly or constituted state, the will of the majority should be rejected, and that of a small minority adopted as the rule. Sometimes men

will permit their doubts on some points to paralyse the clearest acknowledged truths on others. To escape from such an inveterate obliquity of mind, a man should fix his attention on positive acknowledged truth, and, as it were, entrench himself behind it. If he will play faithfully a single great gun of truth behind that entrenchment, he may keep off a whole army of doubts. Let him play the artillery-man and stick to his cannon. But if he leave his entrenchment and go down into the plain to fight with the doubts on their own ground, which is always the lying depravity and unbelief of a man's own heart, they will take him captive, strip him of his armor and trample him under foot. Or if he permit them to get within his own entrenchment, they will spike his guns, and render them useless. There is acknowledged and undoubted truth enough to save him, and put a complete end to his doubts, if he will throw himself behind the truth; but if he neglect the truth and follow the doubts, he will wander in a wilderness of nettles, till he come to the congregation of the dead.

Under the disastrous influence of evil teaching, some minds become perplexed with doubts in regard to the atonement and divinity of Christ. If a man, neglecting or shutting out from his view the clear positive argument gives way to such doubts, and rejects Christ, he is cut off from the possibility of faith or salvation. What then is a soul to do while thus perplexed? Let a man search the Scriptures, and not follow human guides, and let him carry to God in prayer the passages which directly teach the truths on which he doubts, and so doing, his mind will soon be clear. Let him not carry them to express doubt in regard to them, not to ask God if they are true, but to say, Lord, I believe all that is contained in these Scriptures. Help thou me to understand them, and show me the great things contained in them. Give thou the light of thy Holy Spirit upon them, and then shall I see. A man

must come acknowledging his blindness and helplessness, and crying out to God to enlighten him.

We have said that if Peter's attention had continued fixed on Christ, he would have persevered, but being distracted and divided from Christ, his enterprise went to the bottom. There is here a great instruction for all who are in any way engaged in the enterprises of the Christian Life. We are, as it were, walking on the water to come to Jesus. Except Christ make our foundation firm, it will be unstable as water, and we cannot excel. And indeed if he were to leave us to ourselves, we should sink at once. Just so, if our attention is distracted from Christ, we are sure to sink. Our only safety is in aiming direct and steady at Christ, trusting in him. If we neglect him, it will not need boisterous winds and waves to sink us; we shall go down of our own accord. Even calm weather, smooth seas, and external success may be our ruin if we do not aim solely at Christ, advance steadily to him, and trust only in him. Satan may drown the soul, and drown a church, more easily in calm prosperous weather than in a tempest, if it be not fixed upon him, supported and built up by his grace. There is the greatest need of watchfulness and prayer.

If for a time the air be calm,
  Serene and smooth the sea appears,
And shows no danger to alarm
  The inexperienced landsman's fears.
But if the tempest once arise,
  The faithless water swells and raves;
Its billows, foaming to the skies,
  Disclose a thousand threatening graves.

My untried heart thus seemed to me
  (So little of myself I knew)
Smooth as the calm unruffled sea,
  But ah! it proved as treacherous too.

The peace of which I had a taste
When Jesus first his love revealed,
I fondly hoped would always last,
Because my foes were then concealed.

But when I felt the Tempter's power
Rouse my corruptions from their sleep,
I trembled at the stormy hour,
And saw the horrors of the deep.
Now on presumption's billows borne,
My spirit seemed the Lord to dare;
Now, quick as thought, a sudden turn
Plunged me in gulfs of black despair.

Lord, save me, or I sink, I prayed;
He heard, and bid the tempest cease;
The angry waves his word obeyed,
And all my fears were hushed to peace.
The peace is his, and not my own,
My heart, no better than before,
Is still to dreadful changes prone,
Then never let me trust it more.

NEWTON.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Creed of Faith.

The experiences of Peter during that night of storm and trial on the deep, were a greater revelation of himself to himself, and of his relations to Christ, than he had had before during his whole life-time. Courage and fear, presumption and disappointment, self-confidence and ruin, faith and self-despair, and faith again growing out of that, succeeded each other as rapidly and violently in his soul as the mountain waves that threatened to engulf him. The first natural expression of the whole man breaks out in the cry, Lord, save me. He was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me! A very different experience is here recorded from that in which Peter set out in this movement.

In the exercise of his faith in the first instance, when he began to walk on the water to go to Jesus, there may have been something mingled of vain self-confidence; and if so, that was enough speedily to finish his experiment. If so, it was not the winds and the waves that overwhelmed him, nor even his fear of them, but his own ignorant reliance on himself, and perhaps on his imagined great attainments in faith. A person may possibly have a misplaced confidence in his own faith, instead of Christ. But faith is good for nothing in itself, good for nothing, except as laying hold of Christ; and if faith instead of Christ is one's reliance for salvation, there will be a shipwreck.

Now in this second outcry of Peter there was real faith, unmingled with any self-confidence, whatever there may

have been in his mind and heart when he set out from the ship. One can easily conceive that then there may have been, with all his confidence in Christ, a side glance at his fellow fishermen, and a willingness to be seen outdoing them in his intimacy with Christ and his devotedness to him. Whatever there was of that character, it went far to spoil his faith, and prepare him for sinking. Accordingly, in one or two steps his faith is all gone, at least that of which he would make a display, the faith of supererogation, in the possession of which a man might feel as if he had something to boast of, and he was reduced down to common beggary. He sinks like a common, unbelieving man.

And now begins a real, unaffected, heartfelt, saving faith; not the faith of miracles, but the faith of a sinful, dying soul, despairingly crying out for mercy. Lord, save me, I perish! Nothing affected in that, nothing of display, or pride, or self-confidence in that; but a genuine, submissive faith, wrought out from the anguish of a soul in self-despair, that, forgetting everything else, relinquishing everything else, falls helpless at the feet of Christ for mercy. It is not improbable that Christ permitted Peter to go so far, in order to show him what was in his heart; this was one of the many occasions of discipline and trial which Peter had to go through for the refining of his character. And it must have been followed with great searchings of heart on the part of Peter. He sat down in the ship that night and pondered much concerning the workings of his mind, and the nature of efficacious faith in Christ. And he began to see that faith was a greater, and yet a more simple thing than he had ever imagined. He may have thought, at first, that he had great faith. And doubtless his fellow disciples thought so too, when they saw him getting over the side of the ship in that tempest, and beginning absolutely to walk on the water to go to Jesus. But he and they thought differently as soon as he began to sink; and Christ thought so very differently after

the whole transaction, that he set him down at that period in his Christian life as Little-Faith.

There is great instruction to the Christian from this entire representation. It is not an unconverted man only, who is vexed and tempted and cast into prison of unbelief. The Christian is troubled daily, and sometimes grievously, almost to the destruction of his soul, with this distressing evil of our corrupt nature. He often says with Peter, Lord, *if* it be thou, when he should say, Lord, it *is* thou. It is perhaps only through experiences like this of Peter that any soul ever arrives at a firm, fixed, lasting faith in Christ, a faith which is the result of a practical knowledge both of our own weakness and of Christ's strength, our own guilt and Christ's mercy and grace ; a faith like that of Paul's, When I am weak, then am I strong.

A man can walk through great trials calmly, if he only sees Christ, only feels that Christ is with him. Great trials may be met with in the path of duty, and in great enterprises. The Christian is to count the cost, and throw himself on Christ. And in counting the cost, the Christian must put Christ and his promises at the foundation.

He and his family may be in a furnace like that of the three Hebrews under Nebuchadnezzar; but if they see a form like unto the Son of God walking with them, if they are blessed with the privilege of sweet uninterrupted communion with Christ, what is there that they cannot do, what is there that they will not cheerfully suffer ? If in the midst of trials, a man's soul is absorbed in Christ, then he thinks comparatively little of the trials, but looks above them and away from them, and is only anxious that Christ's blessed will may be accomplished by the purifying of the soul through such affliction. If he be walking on the water to go to Jesus, the tempests that rise only hurry him the faster to Christ, provided it be Christ alone that his affections are fixed upon. But if his attention is drawn away from Christ, and fixed upon the dangers that are rising around him,

then he easily becomes frightened. Nothing can terrify him while Christ fills the eye of his soul. He can overcome all enemies, can do all things through Christ strengthening him. He may conquer all his sins, if he looks to Christ, but if he look to his sins only, they will conquer and kill him, and he will sink in them.

So that this looking to Christ, direct to Christ, is the secret of safety amidst obstacles and dangers. Sleep-walkers will often perform the most amazing feats of dexterity, and walk safely where, if wide awake, they could not venture without destruction. It is because they do not see the dangers around them, but only their own step and purpose, and therefore go firmly, without trembling, and so without evil. So it is with the soul looking only to Christ. It does not seem to regard dangers at all, at which other men are full of terror. And this is true wisdom, being fixed upon one's course for Christ, to regard only one's own step and purpose for him, and take it firmly, as if there were no more dangers than are seen by the eye of a sleep-walker. For safety consists in faith and courage, and danger consists often in fear. The sea bears up the steps as long as Christ is in the eye, but when the eye is on the waves and the wind, the sea opens, and the soul sinks. Paul, looking to Christ, could say, None of these things move me. He was ready for anything. He would adventure himself in the theatre among wild beasts in the shape of men at Ephesus, and if he had gone in, he would doubtless have come off safe. But if he had not looked to Christ, he would have been timid, thrown off his balance, not self-possessed, perhaps terrified, and unable to accomplish anything. Self-possession is a great result of the love of Christ filling the soul, and taking away all fear but the fear of displeasing Christ. With a courage made up of such elements a man can do anything. "Have I served the Lord of Life these thirty years," said the holy Mr. Fletcher to a highwayman who put a pistol to his breast, "that I should now be afraid of death?" The

calm courageous answer, the benevolent look, and the fearless reproof, disarmed the murderer, and the man, we believe, became a Christian. There are many such instances of Satan being bound by the calm, self-possessed, unyielding courage of faith in Christ.

A man's word, in such cases, must not be that of Peter, Lord, *if* it be thou. That *if* could never bind Satan, nor disarm death of its terrors. Yet, many times a Christian can get no further than this, *If it be thou.* But this is unbelief. A man is more apt to say this in trying times, than in prosperous ones. In the endurance of God's chastising discipline, he is sometimes tempted to despair, as if God had given him over to Satan, and he trembles in fear of what is coming next, and can only say, *Lord, if it be thou,* bid me come unto thee; and then waits to see. But he should say, It is the Lord, and though he should slay me, yet will I trust in him. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path.

To have a sense of God's presence, in trials, is a sweet triumph of faith. But we sometimes feel that it is God, without feeling that it is God *as our Father and Friend.* This again is unbelief, and here again comes up the language of Peter, IF *it be thou.* But a Christian is bound to trust. He has nothing to do, under God's discipline, in God's service, with his *ifs.* Provided he trusts in God, he is really a Christian, and provided he be a Christian, then there is no doubt that all things are working together for his good. So in no circumstances of trial is he justified in saying, IF *it be thou;* for it always is the Lord. Although he be overwhelmed in sickness, death, loss of friends, disappointment, poverty, evils of any or every kind, it is the Lord, and the Lord for good, and the soul must say with Job and David, It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. What seemeth good to God *is* good; what seemeth good to man oftentimes is but evil. Christ may come in the night, in the storm, upon the sea. When the winds are up, and the waves roar, and there is

a tumult of the people, it may be a preparation for a calm, majestic, midnight walk of the Lord to the ship, to the church, to the hearts of his people. They should not be too fearful of events that seem untoward. If God orders them, God will come with them, and will show his glory by them. If as evil he permits them, he can, notwithstanding, bring greater good out of them.

Rejoice, believer, in the Lord,
Who makes your cause his own;
The hope that's built upon his Word
Can ne'er be overthrown.
Though many foes beset your road,
And feeble is your arm,
Your life is hid with Christ in God,
Beyond the reach of harm.

Weak as you are, you shall not faint,
Or fainting, shall not die;
Jesus, the strength of every saint,
Will aid you from on high.
Though sometimes unperceived by sense
Faith sees him always near,
A Guide, a Glory, a Defence;
Then what have you to fear?

God may come to the believer in the night of affliction. He may have appointed the affliction, in order that he *may* come *in* it. It may be his chariot of love to the soul. Thy way is in the sea, thy paths are in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Some of God's greatest mercies to his church and to individuals have been conveyed in this way. By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation. Affliction indeed is not good in itself,-but only when God comes in and with it. Therefore no man is required to desire affliction, or to pray for suffering, even for Christ's sake, but if God sends it, to faint not, but to receive and bear it as his discipline for good. There is always a *need be* connected with it; and those who are the subjects of such

discipline, "*kept by the power of God,*" are enabled greatly to rejoice in the promises of God, though now for a season, "*if need be,*" they are in heaviness through manifold temptations. They may thus even count it all joy when they fall into divers trials, because, in the endurance of such trials, God dealeth with them as sons, and their faith and patience are perfected. The seeds of a harvest of holiness are sown, and the causes are set in motion, which will work out an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. For, though no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby.

Undoubtedly, suffering for Christ's sake is the most desirable of all suffering. Paul and Peter both speak of it as a privilege vouchsafed. Not a thing to be sought for, but when it comes in the course of one's duty, to be thankful for, and to glorify God on this behalf, that unto you it is given, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake. If ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye. Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. And if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. Paul even speaks of his desire to be made to know the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. But it does not appear that he ever sought for sufferings or prayed for them, but that he might bear them for Christ. He never rushed into danger, except where duty called him, nor courted either suffering or martyrdom; but having been shown how great things he must suffer for the name of Christ, he never shrank from duty because such suffering was connected with it, but went forward to duty, moved by none of these things. He would not bring suffering upon himself for Christ by imprudence, but as far

as might be consistent with duty, avoided suffering; but when it came in the path of duty, he thanked God for it. And Paul was made of such material, that of two courses of duty, open before him, both to all appearance equally profitable for usefulness, he would probably have chosen that course, which involved in it the most of difficulty, of danger, and of suffering. He would have done this out of love to Christ, the sense of his own unworthiness, and from the feeling that it was the greatest of all privileges to be made a partaker of the sufferings of Christ. But he would neither have courted suffering, nor acted unnecessarily in such a way as to bring suffering.

Thus far the exercise of the faith of which we have been speaking is comparatively easy. But there is a case in which it becomes exceedingly difficult; the case of evils which we have brought upon ourselves, by our own folly, disobedience, or madness. But here again, if the soul flees to Christ; if with humble sorrow for sin, and for the sins which have brought suffering, and not for the suffering merely, a man goes to God; then he may be sure that God is in those evils, and will direct and temper them, and bring good out of them. And a man is not to shut himself up in an iron cage because of them, nor to say, My life is extinct, my breath is corrupt, my hope is for ever cut off from the Lord. He must not doubt of God's goodness, because of God's chastisements, nor say, Lord, *if it be thou*, bid me come to thee, but he must still cry, God be merciful to me a sinner. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.

Suffering of this kind is indeed dreadful. Such sufferings as Samson experienced, when his eyes were destroyed by his enemies, and he was thrown into the prison-house of the Philistines, were probably a lively image of the suffering of the world of woe. And if God did not prevent it by his grace, probably many a man under such torment would, like Judas, destroy himself. But if the soul humbly and repentingly trusts in God, God is in and with even such

sufferings, and can and will bring good out of them, and a man should say, It is the Lord. For He it is, although in the very castle of Giant Despair. His sufferings may have been brought upon him by his own folly, and they may have come even after he has, like Peter, walked some steps on the water to go to Jesus. And in such a case nothing can be done, but simply the use of Peter's outcry, Lord, save me! Indeed, in all our failures this is all that we can do. We can neither make up for past deficiencies, nor atone for present or past sins; but we can avoid the great additional guilt of present unbelief; we can cry out, Lord, save me, and that is the very creed of faith, in three words.

There was once written by a great sufferer from the habit of taking opium, and a man of great poetical genius, exquisite sensibility, vast learning, and extraordinary powers of mind (Mr. Coleridge), the following paragraph of remarks upon a passage in the Table Talk of Luther. "When Satan saith in thy heart, God will not pardon thy sins, nor be gracious unto thee; I pray, said Luther, how wilt thou, as a poor sinner, raise up and comfort thyself, especially when other signs of God's wrath besides do beat upon thee, as sickness, poverty, desertion of friends? And that thy heart beginneth to preach and to say, Behold here thou livest in sickness, thou art poor and forsaken of every one, and miserable and wretched, what canst thou answer? Can any but Christ raise thee up? Oh how true, how affectingly true, is this! And when, too, Satan the Tempter becomes Satan the Accuser, saying in thine heart, this sickness is the consequence of sin, or of sinful infirmity, and under such evidence of God's wrath, how canst thou expect to be saved? Well may the soul cry out, Who shall deliver me from the death that lives and tyrannizes in my body! But the gospel answer, There is redemption from the body promised; only cling to Christ. Call on him continually, with all thy heart and all thy soul, to give thee strength, and be strong in thy weakness, and what Christ doth not see good to relieve thee from, suffer

in hope. It may be better for thee to be kept humble and in self-abasement. The thorn in the flesh may remain, and yet the grace of God through Christ, prove sufficient for thee. Only cling to Christ, and do thy best. In all thy love and well-doing gird thyself up to improve and use aright what remains free in thee, and if thou doest aught aright, say and thankfully believe that Christ hath done it for thee. Oh what a miserable, despairing wretch should I be," adds Mr. Coleridge (for it was he who wrote this record), "if I gave up the faith that the life of Christ would precipitate the remaining dregs of sin in the crisis of death, and that I should rise in purer capacity of Christ, blind, to be irradiated by his light, empty, to be possessed by his fulness, naked of merit, to be clothed by his righteousness!"

This is the creed of faith, Lord, save me! To this we must all come in the end. All our power is reduced down to this, Lord, save me! The greatest Christian has nothing but this; the weakest one may and must throw himself upon this. We must all come to this. We ought to begin, continue, and end with this. It was Peter's mistake, in the case before us, and in all his after failures, that he did not *begin* with this; if he had, he might not have found himself sinking; he ought to have begun, where he had to end, in self-despair. We must find our whole strength in this, Lord, save me! Whether we undertake our own or others' salvation, this must be our motto, Lord, save me! We must *persevere* in this, relying on nothing else.

We are to observe that Peter, when he found himself sinking, did not abandon his enterprise, nor turn back to get again into the ship, which he had left for Christ. Whatever were his faults, he was not one of your Pliables, who, having put their hand to the plough, turn back, and are seen getting out of the Slough of Despond in the way back to the City of Destruction. Neither did he call out to his fellow seamen to cast him a rope, or do anything for him, though he must have been nearer to them, seemingly,

than he was to Christ; but he cried out after Christ, none but Christ. Indeed, Christ was shining in the darkness in this hour of peril, while the ship to him was nothing but a black hulk, tossed and in danger. So he cried out after Christ. There was a singularly interesting mixture of faith, unbelief, self-confidence, and self-despair, succeeding one another. But self-despair and faith gained the victory, after all, looking only to Christ, exalting only Christ.

See the difference between the Creed of Faith and the Creed of Doubt. If it be thou, is the Creed of Doubt; Lord, save me, is the Creed of Faith. It is truly said that Doubt may bring an objection in five words, or even in one, which it will take Faith a great many words to answer. There is truth in this; and yet the Creed of Doubt is the longest and the most difficult. The believer has fewer things to believe than the infidel. The believer trusts only in God; the infidel in the devil and his own sinful heart. The infidel swallows things that demand the credulity of idiots and fools; the believer accepts things that demand simply the highest exercise of an enlightened reason. The infidel, having swallowed his portion, is always in doubt and fear, even in regard to things that he disbelieves. The believer, having accepted God's evidence, knows the things that are freely given to him of God. The infidel, even here, has the devil's portion, to tremble, though Satan keeps him from believing, till it be too late for ever, till belief is only the experience of suffering. The believer, even here, has the saints' and angels' portion, to rejoice,—to love and to rejoice—although as yet he is not permitted to see, but simply believes, and that too perhaps amidst trial and suffering. Yet in Christ, though now he sees him not, believing, he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

And then the end, what a difference in the end! That of faith, everlasting blessedness, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. That of unbelief

everlasting misery, a dying in your sins, and a living in the penalty of them for ever. He that believeth on the Son shall never perish, but hath everlasting life. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

How blest thy creature is, O God,
When with a single eye,
He views the lustre of thy Word,
The day-spring from on high!
Through all the storms that veil the skies,
And frown on earthly things,
The Sun of Righteousness he eyes,
With healing on his wings.

Struck by that light, the human heart,
A barren soil no more,
Sends the sweet smell of grace abroad,
Where serpents lurked before.
The soul, a dreary province once,
Of Satan's dark domain,
Feels a new empire formed within,
And owns a heavenly reign.

The glorious orb, whose golden beams,
The fruitful year control,
Since first obedient to thy Word
He started from the goal,
Has cheered the nations with the joy
His orient rays impart;
But JESUS, 'tis thy light alone
Can shine upon the heart!

COWPER.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Reproof of Mercy.

We are apt to judge of character from bold and animated profession; it is the mistake of the world generally. But the reality of character is determined only by the result; the measure and gauge of a man's virtues can be accurately taken, only when it is seen how they wear, and not by the piece out of which he professes to have cut them. After all Peter's apparent drafts on the great Bank of Faith, he was still Little-Faith. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

If it had not been for Christ's delineation of Peter's faith, we might have supposed, perhaps, that it was very strong, that it was, indeed, a most miraculous faith; for he walked on the water to go to Jesus. We may have seen other persons set out in the same bold manner, and stop and sink as suddenly. This is not uncommon; self-presumption, self-reliance, or reliance even on experience of grace, instead of Christ, may easily lead to this.

If a man say within himself, I have stock of grace sufficient for such and such an enterprise, my capital will enable me to trade so far, I was born at such a time ago into Christ, and my established piety, my strength of soul in Christ, will hold me up; it is a great mistake. Past experience alone will not sustain a man, either now or for the time to come. Past experience will justify a man in

trusting Christ now and for the time to come, but not in trusting in his own strength, not even his strength of grace. The manna must be gathered daily, and as for the future, it must be left to faith. Experience, as Henry Martyn used to say, rots on one's hands, if a man trusts to that instead of Christ; just as the manna of the Israelites bred worms, if they hoarded it up for the morrow, instead of trusting in God for a new supply. This was a striking lesson of faith in the wilderness, and we too must come to Christ daily for our bread, trusting not in yesterday's strength of grace, or in what remains over, but in Christ. Christ, who has supplied, must still supply it, or it will all fail. So a man must say, I *have* nothing, can *do* nothing, *am* nothing, but in Christ.

Peter himself became strong, as well as Paul, only in proportion as he learned this lesson, When I am weak, then am I strong, doing all things through Christ strengthening me. Peter sinking was really nearer to Christ, than Peter walking on the water. The very failure of our enterprises may sometimes bring us nearer to God, than success in them, and prepare us the better for future conquests. If Peter had reached Christ in the frame of mind in which he started, he might have been further from him in reality than he was before he left the ship, and more in danger from pride and presumption in his own heart, than he could be from all the winds and waves on the ocean. He was here gaining an experience in Christ, which would indeed be lasting; the experience of his own weakness; a kind of manna which a man may keep by him without danger of its spoiling; and the experience of Christ's strength, equally good to keep for remembrance and faith. After Christ's word, of which Peter had been so doubtful, the foundation of faith was the experience of his own weakness and of Christ's strength.

O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Let us see how this question could have been answered by Peter, or how it could be answered by any one now, in

any similar situation, either in the Christian life, or setting out upon it. Can any man tell any good reasons that he has for doubting? Could Peter give any satisfactory answer to Christ's question? Or can any man, required to trust simply in Christ, and march to duty at his command, give any satisfactory reason for doubting?

Suppose we begin with the evidence, which was the first thing at which Peter seems to have stumbled. *Lord, if it be thou!* What greater evidence could Peter have, what greater can any man have, than God's Word? If Christ says, It is I, be not afraid, come unto me, what evidence can be greater, or could be better, than that? Is the evidence of sense more trustworthy? Is there *any* evidence which is trustworthy, not based upon God's Word. The experience which has not that for its foundation, must be false. If you cannot rely upon God's Word, there is nothing that you can rely upon. God's Word is the highest of all evidence, and if that fails, if you cannot rest upon that, you have nowhere else to go. This was Peter's experience at a later time. Lord, to whom *shall* we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life! If a man cannot come to Christ and trust Christ on his word simply and solely, there is no being, or place, or reality, or evidence in the universe, that he can go to for relief, or trust in for assurance and deliverance. The word of Christ should be at once the assurance of faith, the destruction of doubt, the guide and unshaken confidence of the soul. If it be not, what *can* a man do? Whether he be in the ship or on the waves, it makes no difference, he is lost, there is no refuge for him. For if he cannot rely on God's Word, and trust in Christ accordingly, there is no foundation for his soul, nor anything stable or true, nor any evidence that he can rest upon, nor any possibility of peace or happiness in the universe.

Wherefore didst thou doubt? There could not be stronger evidence than that of God's Word; if anything be more convincing to any soul than that, it is because of

something wrong in the soul; evil, blindness, the distortion of depravity and unbelief. If you cannot rely upon Christ, and the evidence of his cross, and of God's Word in him, in regard to your duty, and your support and safety in the performance of your duty, there is nothing that you can rely upon, but you are lost. Your only salvation is the acceptance of God's evidence, and the casting of your whole being upon Christ.

But perhaps, dismissing the evidence, or accepting of that unhesitatingly, you and Peter will answer to the question, Wherefore didst thou doubt? that it was your sins, your own unworthiness and great guilt that made you doubt. But *whom* did it make you doubt? Just the being, on whom it ought to have thrown you in the most submissive confidence. Your sins are good reasons for doubting yourself, but not Christ. They are reasons for self-despair, but the reason of all reasons for trusting Christ. Your sins are the reasons why you must come to Christ, not why you should doubt Christ. The greater your guilt, the greater your plea for mercy, the more suitable your case for his interposition; and the greater your guilt the greater the reason why you should not doubt him, but amidst winds and waves fly to him. Sin should make every man distrustful only of himself, trustful in Christ, unbelieving only in himself, believing in Christ. Sin is in fact the sinner's claim on Christ; he has no other. It is not the bar in the way of mercy, but the *reason for* mercy. So the sinner must believe, not in spite of his guilt, but because of it; he must beg for pardoning mercy, not, *notwithstanding* the greatness of his guilt, but *by reason* of it. For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity, *for it is great.* His sins are the great reason of faith, so many arguments for believing, so many grounds for faith to rest upon. So instead of answering to the question, Wherefore didst thou doubt? Because of the greatness of my guilt; *that* is to be alleged as the very reason for *believing.* If you are asked, Wherefore

do you believe, you may well say, Because I am a sinner, a guilty, lost sinner, and the gospel is just for me and my case, and none but an Almighty Saviour could have contrived it for me, or brought it to me. The gospel belongs to me, and Christ belongs to me, and is mine, because I am so great a sinner. You may put the adversary of the soul to flight with this argument, when his powerful malice will be overcome by none other. When he presents your guilt as the reason of unbelief, do you present it as the ground of faith.

And so in all your enterprises for Christ, if tempted to despair, because of your unworthiness and unfitness for the work Christ calls you to do, or the errand he sends you upon, make *that* an argument of faith; an argument indeed for self-despair, but for casting all upon Christ, and for going forward cheerfully, boldly, fearless of the consequences, throwing all upon him. Your guilt is not a reason for not engaging in his service, but for casting yourself entirely upon his grace in that service. Your weakness is not a reason for abandoning your enterprise, or doing little for Christ, but it is a reason, the *great* reason, for coming to Christ perpetually, that his strength may be manifested, perfected, and glorified in your weakness.

Cheer up, my soul, there is a mercy-seat
Sprinkled with blood, where Jesus answers prayer;
There humbly cast thyself beneath his feet,
For never needy sinner perished there.

Lord, I am come! thy promise is my plea;
Without thy word I durst not venture nigh;
But Thou hast called the burdened soul to Thee,
A weary, burdened soul, O Lord, am I!

Bowed down beneath a heavy load of sin,
By Satan's fierce temptations sorely pressed,
Beset without, and full of fears within,
Trembling and faint, I come to Thee for rest.

Be Thou my Refuge, Lord, my hiding-place!
I know no force can tear me from thy side,
Unmoved I there may all accusers face,
And answer every charge with JESUS DIED.

Yes, Thou didst weep, and bleed, and groan, and die,
Well hast Thou known what fierce temptations mean;
Such was thy love, and now, enthroned on high,
The same compassions in thy bosom reign.

Lord, give me faith! He hears—what grace is this!
Dry up thy tears, my soul, and cease to grieve!
He shows me what he did, and who He is,
I must, I will, I can, I do believe.

NEWTON.

But again, perhaps you and Peter, when Christ asks, Oh! thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? are ready to answer, The dangers, the dreadful dangers, the tempests, the winds boisterous, the waves raging. Again, here is a reason for trusting Christ, not for disbelieving. A reason for pressing towards Christ, not for resisting, staying away, or turning. For, who can overcome these dangers, or save you from them, but Christ? Whom will they obey, but him only? Who knows them perfectly, or can control them, but he? Besides, your business is with Christ, dangers or no dangers, irrespective of everything. What hast thou to do with the dangers, if thou hast the command of thy Lord in thy course, and plain duty? In such a case the dangers are nothing to thee; they are not to be considered; they are Christ's business, Christ's care. Thy care must be Christ's work, his is thy life and protection. Thou art setting out in duty. Now perhaps the wind begins to rise, but what is that to thee? Thou must still take thy steps towards Christ and for Christ. Hast thou taken one step? What must thou do next? Stand still, and gaze about upon the dangers? Oh no! but look for the next step. Look to Christ, and *take* the next step.

It may be it is the Slough of Despond that thou art

passing through, and thy soul is cast down within thee. Look for the steps, scripture steps, promises and directions. On them step forward to Christ, and thou art safe, even amidst that Slough of Despond and those dangers. Thou wilt be out of it soon, and on the side towards the shining light. But even if thou miss the steps, and sink deeply, thou hast still nothing to do but to struggle towards Christ. When Christ is the end and aim of all effort, a man is sure of safety and success. It may not be success according to the flesh, but it will be, according to the spirit. Christ's mercy shall be exalted and manifested, and Christ's glory shall be accomplished in all his dealings with the soul that in all things aims at him. Aiming at Christ, making him your end, there can be no such thing as final defeat or disappointment. The dangers that surrounded you shall accomplish only his object and your good, while your soul is stayed on him.

But again, perhaps you answer to the question, Wherefore didst thou doubt? Because you are in darkness. The dangers you think would be nothing, if you only enjoyed the light, but you are in darkness, and therefore do you doubt. Doubt whom? Should darkness in yourself make you doubt Christ? Oh no, it is rather an argument for faith; for in him is light and in him only; in him is light, and no darkness at all; and therefore, the greater the darkness that you find elsewhere, the more earnestly ought this to make you be pressing on towards Christ, till in him you find light. It will always be darkness out of him. Come to him, therefore, for light. The darker it is with you, the darker around you, and the darker in your own soul, the greater the reason for relying on the Lord. It will not help you to stay where you are, it will not help you to brood over the darkness, it cannot make your case worse to go forward to Christ, and in fine, trusting in Christ, waiting on him is the only thing you can do. It is the very thing you are commanded to do. Who is among you that, hearing the voice of God's Word, walketh in

darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God. But in truth a man can never say that there is no light. When all other light fails, and there is none inward and none external, there is light in God's Word. If there is no light in the soul for it to enjoy, there is light in God's Word for it to be guided by. Let it follow that, and there will be light in the soul.

Darkness is a reason for doubting everything but Christ, but a reason for trusting in him, drawing near to him, and keeping close at his side. Darkness is a reason for distrusting oneself, and walking warily in prayer, and crying out for Christ's help, but certainly not a reason for unbelief. When Peter was in darkness, nothing but darkness around him, darkness within him, and the waves opening to swallow him up, Christ was shining, and the only light that could be seen that night was in him. It is always so. We may seem to have light in ourselves, but it may be mere ignorance and pride; or if there is real light it is only because Christ is shining within us, and upon us, and some reflection is seen of his own light. Darkness in ourselves, and darkness around us, is no reason for doubting the light, but for believing in it, loving it, and pressing forward to it. I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be children of the light. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. Again we say, though at the hazard of repetition, darkness is no reason for doubt, but a strong reason for faith; for it is plain that though a man may be in darkness, and have great reason to distrust himself, that is no reason for distrusting Christ, but for pressing after him; for all the real light of the world is in him, and he that followeth him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Hope thou in God.

Be still, my heart! these anxious cares
To thee are burdens, thorns, and snares;
They cast dishonor on thy Lord,
And contradict his gracious Word.
Brought safely by his hand thus far,
Why wilt thou now give place to fear?
How canst thou want, if He provide,
Or lose thy way with such a guide?

When first before his mercy-seat
Thou didst to Him thy all commit,
He gave thee warrant, from that hour,
To trust his wisdom, love, and power.
Did ever trouble yet befall,
And He refuse to hear thy call?
And has he not his promise passed,
That thou shalt overcome at last?

He who has helped thee hitherto,
Will help thee all thy journey through,
And give thee daily cause to raise
New Ebenezers to his praise.
Though rough and thorny be the road,
It leads thee home apace to God;
Then count thy present trials small,
For heaven will make amends for all.

NEWTON.

Now the consideration of our Blessed Lord's question shows us that there is such a faith as to exclude doubt; that in respect to Christ it always *ought* to exclude doubt, doubt in regard to him being the consequence of sin, and in itself a sinful state of mind. This entire faith, excluding all unbelief, ought to be the possession of every Christian. No Christian ought ever to entertain a doubt of Christ's promises, Christ's forgiving mercy, Christ's supporting presence and all-sufficiency. Every Christian ought to have the fullest confidence of Christ's presence in his path of duty, and ought to tread that path without fear, and with the fullest faith, even though in darkness. The secret of this faith is simply an eye single to Christ

and his glory, with which the whole body shall be full of light. If self be out of the way, and the heart looking only to Christ, anxious only to please him and advance his kingdom, then there is no opportunity for darkness, and nothing at all but light and glory in the prospect. Every Christian ought so to believe in Christ, and so to follow him, as to have the light of life. It is a most remarkable expression, this light of life. He shall have light upon his life, and the experience and enjoyment of that life, which itself is light. Life in Christ, a partaking of his holiness, a quickening sense of his preciousness and presence, an eye single to him, is itself a light upon everything, and invests everything with light. Love itself is light, and the light of life is love. When love reigns, faith reigns, and there is no room for doubt or darkness. Even the commencement of such a state in this world is blessed, but what must the perfection of it be in heaven, where every holy soul will love as it is loved, and see as it is seen. A man should aim to live as habitually in this state as possible, here upon earth, for it is the only state of power, usefulness, and happiness.

The case of these disciples of Christ, and especially of Peter, teaches an interesting lesson as to the gradual growth of the Christian graces, and perfection of the Christian character. Take Peter as he was in the gospels, especially in the early part of his career of discipleship, and compare him with Peter in the epistles, and what a surprising change! What humility and meekness, what richness of knowledge and love, what calmness, gentleness, and stability of faith, his unbelief all gone, his faith the source of joy unspeakable and full of glory. So may any and every sincere Christian, sincerely striving after Christ, hope that the dross of unbelief shall at length be purged away. Peter's faith was wavering even till after the crucifixion of his Lord; it would utterly have failed, but for Christ's mercy, in the hour of temptation and suffering. But I have prayed for thee, said the gracious Saviour, that

thy faith fail not. He who caught Peter and raised him up when sinking in the sea, raised him up also when he had fallen beneath the temptations of Satan, who would have him to sift him as wheat. Had not Christ prayed for him, he would never have been raised up from that fall; he would not even have had faith to cry, Lord, save me!

All depends on Christ; faith, strength, grace, perseverance, success, hope, life, everything,—all depends on Christ. The end of the Word of God, and of all preaching and writing *from* that Word, is Christ; the object and end of the Sabbath and all its ordinances, is Christ; the purpose of all God's providence and grace, is Christ; the object, end, and soul of every Christian enterprise, is Christ. He is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. A man must be in Christ, and have an interest in Christ's prayers, a portion in Christ's love, or, though he have all knowledge, he is nothing; nay, he is a sinful, self-willed possessor of the element of evil, powerful for nothing but evil, and good for nothing but to be burned. He might have power to live a thousand lives in one, or to ward off the stroke of death for a thousand years; he might walk on a thousand raging seas unharmed, and have power to defy all the elements; he might have at his command the riches of a thousand worlds; but, unacquainted with Christ, he is a sinful, miserable, lost soul. The problem of a man's whole existence, therefore, is to find Christ, to come to Christ, to be found in Christ.

Of all the gifts thy hand bestows,
Thou Giver of all good,
Not heaven itself a richer knows,
Than my Redeemer's blood.

Faith, too, the blood-receiving grace,
From the same hand we gain;
Else, sweetly as it suits our case,
That gift had been in vain.

Till Thou thy teaching power apply,
  Our hearts refuse to see,
And, weak as a distempered eye,
  Shut out the view of Thee.

Blind to the merits of thy Son,
  What misery we endure!
Yet fly that hand, from which alone
  We could expect a cure.

We praise Thee, and would praise Thee more!
  To Thee our all we owe;
The precious Saviour, and the power
  That makes him precious too.

COWPER.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Justification by Faith, and obedience after it.—The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.

THE windings of the River of the Water of Life, supposed as a stream on which the soul is sailing, land a man, at whatever point he would effect a landing, only on the ground of Justification by Faith. Many a man has endeavored to save himself by a new life of his own, by the careful, costly manufacture of a morality, by which he would fain meet the demands of a violated law, but has come to the discovery that what he needs is a new life in Christ, with Christ and not self, as the soul of it. What he needs is first of all a Saviour, not a helper, for that merely could do him no good, but a Saviour; a Saviour for him in his sins, and without any morality; a Saviour *from* his sins, and then, thus saved, thus justified, before there is any the least imaginable ground of justification in himself, love produces a morality which self could not produce, a morality which is true piety, a morality which is the consequence of Christ in the soul, and not a propitiatory bribe to induce him to come to the soul. He comes, and then there is true morality; but there is no morality *until* he comes.

There may be great and painful efforts after it; waxen figures wrought out and exquisitely painted, and great endeavors to breathe the breath of life into them; but all

such attempts do but increase the anguish in any man's soul, who is truly in earnest as Luther was, and do but unveil to him more clearly his guilt and misery. The effort is like pouring oil upon a house in flames. All attempts at self-amendment and salvation apart from Christ are like that sick woman's physicians, on whom, before Christ came, she had spent all her living, and never grew better, but rather grew worse. While refusing to submit to God's way of salvation through and in Christ, every resort, expedient, and effort of the soul, and its very anguish and restless fever of anxiety and inward conflicts, are but a disclosure of sin perpetually increasing, and of the obstinacy of a self-will still holding out against God. These things only return back upon the hardened sinner to increase the already intolerable weight upon his soul. So that in endeavoring to mount the ladder of his own repentance and morality towards heaven, a man is like those who mount the scaling-ladders against an impregnable besieged castle, only to have the ponderous ladders themselves thrown back upon them to crush them. A man must quit his physicians and his scaling-ladders, and throw himself only upon Christ.

There are three great laws, or forms of law, to which our immortal being bears an inevitable and eternal relation. These are, first, the Law of God, for our government; second, the Law of Sin and Death in our depraved nature; third, the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. Under the first we are, as immortal beings, eternally responsible; under the second we are, if not redeemed by grace, eternally in bondage; under the third we are not in subjection naturally, but may, by divine grace, if we will, be brought beneath its blessed power, redeemed by it from sin for ever.

By the two first of these laws there is nothing but condemnation. God's law itself is a law of sin and of death, because it convinces of sin, and can give to the sinner nothing but the penalty. It is a law of sin, because it

makes sin appear. It discovers the guilt of transgression. The light, though it is a law of transparency only, might be called the law of colors and of shadows, because it reveals colors, and is the occasion for shadows to appear. So the law of God, though in itself holiness, and a law of holiness, may be called a law of sin, as showing what sin is, and demonstrating its existence. It is a law of sin, showing man to be a sinner. And it is a law of death, because it adjudges him to death.

By the second of these laws, or forms of law, there is both condemnation and execution, and nothing else; for the law of sin and death in our nature is an active, indwelling principle. It is a life, which itself is sin and death, in our mind, heart, will, conscience; in our habits of alienation from God, in our selfishness and unbelief. It is character; and the law of fixed character is as stable as the law of the universe. It is a voluntary, innate, permanent, active, habitual tendency and disposition. This being a disposition to sin, our chosen corrupt nature is to us a law of sin and of death. We are slaves to it, and the fact of its being a voluntary bondage makes it incomparably more disastrous. We are alive only to evil, and dead only to good. Left to ourselves, we are unceasingly under an evil self, as *our* law, and of course under condemnation of God's law. By nature, in our evil will, we are children of wrath. Our bondage is chosen and self-inflicted, and therefore the worst that possibly can be. The *principles* of our nature are the *law* of our nature. If the principles of our nature are selfish, and the habits of our nature correspondent, supreme selfishness is more certainly the law of our nature, than if there were for us, as an external law, the precept, Thou shalt love thyself supremely. If it were the voluntary principle and habit of our nature to steal, this world would be a surer, stronger law to us, than if it were a precept of our decalogue, Thou *shalt* steal. Of all forms of law, an evil will is the most certain in its operation.

This is the dread law to which the Apostle Paul refers, as the law of sin and of death. Of all conceptions, or imaginations, or realities, or possibilities of evil, it is the worst. Of all forms or essences of hell, that ever entered into the field of thought, vision, or superstition, swept over by an angry conscience, the dominion of such a law, the existence of such a nature, is infinitely the most horrible. All the miseries in the universe do not amount to any possibility of comparison with the misery of being under such a law. All the blessings of the universe, though we were put in possession of them, could do us no good, could make no alleviation of our state of unescapable woe beneath this law. It is a law that makes evil triumphant over good, and converts good into evil. For a being of an evil nature there is no possibility of good; the evil will come out and conquer. This nature will be developed, will burst up out of all restraints and artificial concealments, and over all dykes, and will rule supreme above everything. The element, as the element of fire, if not eradicated, will conquer.

It is under restraint now, the restraint of a state of probation, the restraint of God's mercy in the arrangements of the scheme of redemption, the restraints of the gospel, of the Word of God, of Divine Providence, of grace, of prudence, of friends, families, neighbors, of fears and hopes, of human laws and hindrances. It is modified, balanced, checked, repressed, concealed; but it is still the law, the ruling principle, the principle of nature and of destiny; and when all surrounding influences are gone, when the arrangements of a probationary state no more encompass the soul, when nothing but evil encompasses it, and exasperations and developments of evil principle, then it will show itself supreme and eternal. We may be insensible to it now, we may deny it now, and demand more evidence; but let it be remembered that full evidence would be our ruin. Full evidence, compulsory evidence, the evidence of complete experience, and demonstration

by experience, would be the entire development and conquest of the evil principle, converting earth itself into hell, a world of probation into a world of consequences, ourselves into demons, our state into that of unalterable sin and despair.

It is the very peculiarity of our evidence, that it is evidence for future action, evidence from God's Word and our own partial experience, and not *demonstration* in experience filled up and finished, which would be simply our ruin in hell. It is evidence of tendency, sure, unalterable tendency, given in a world of probation and mercy, for warning and recovery. The partialness of the evidence is the very result of God's mercy, that we may fly while it *is* partial, before we are *in* the burning deep, to him who only can save us *from* that deep, to which the law and tendency of our nature is rapidly and surely conducting us. Therefore, to make the partialness of this evidence a reason for denying it, is to make the very mercy of God the means of our destruction. And yet there are those who deny the essential depravity of their hearts and of all mankind, because it does not break out in nothing *but* depravity; because, they say, your doctrine makes men demons; your doctrine is, that men hate God, and if it were so, the world would be filled with nothing but enmity, whereas there is in it a vast deal of goodness, of benevolence, of kindness, of the recognition of God's bounty, and regard to his laws. And who does not see that it could not be otherwise, if God maintains a state of probation, if he checks, restrains, and softens human depravity so far by goodness and mercy, as to render the offer of the gospel possible and appreciable; if he does not let the tendency and law of human nature go on to its completion, to make indeed a hell on earth, in which there would be no possibility of change. Who does not see that the evidence of entire depravity in man *must* be partial except on God's authority, if God in mercy stops that depravity in its mid-career, and does not let men yet

become demons in their enmity, in order that, being warned, and a time given them, they may fly to Christ to take away that enmity, and train them up for heaven. The perversion of this state of things into an argument against God's own declaration that the carnal mind is enmity against God, and that men in their corruptions are children of wrath and children of the devil, is one of the most terrible and guilty tramplings on divine goodness, into which Satan ever trapped a human soul. No man who values the possibility of salvation will be deceived by such reasoning. No man of any fairness to himself, but will take God's Word as sufficient assurance that the law of his nature, out of Christ, is a law of sin and death. This is the condition of every one of us, by voluntary, free, habitual nature. It is not a law imposed upon us, but a law growing out of our wilful being. It is our *own* law, the law of our *choice*, instead of God's law; the law of our selfishness, our guilt, our distrust, our unbelief; our self-indulgence, self-worship, and pure love of sin. It is a development as sure to conduct us to eternal misery, as our accountable existence is sure to conduct us to eternity itself. This is *our* work, even if God had nothing to do, and would do nothing, in the execution of the penalty of his law. We are the authors and artificers of our own ruin.

Now if there were no remedy for this, if we saw ourselves and all mankind growing into such a state of immutable sin and death, and proceeding to such an inevitable, eternal result, no words could describe, no imagination could conceive, no created mind could measure the horrors of the spectacle. It would be agonizing, infernal, intolerable; it would cover our province of the universe with the blackness of darkness; it would paralyse the soul with despair. And such would have been our condition, but for the system of redemption by the Cross of Christ.

This is the very state of misery, from which Christ came to deliver us. Here is at once the cause and the

glory of his interposition; an interposition in behalf of beings under a self-originated and self-sustained law of enmity against God; and so much the more glorious, so much the more wonderful, in its conception and its execution, by as much as our depravity was deeper, more voluntary, more inimical. It is no honor to God, nor any release of his Word from the charge of a gloomy theology, to deny the fact of entire human depravity. But it does immeasurably exalt the great transaction of the Atonement, and sets the wonderful love and mercy which inspire that scheme in a manifestation incomparably brighter, when the fact of that deep and deadly depravity is taken as it is set down in the Scriptures. The denial of it fills all theology, human and divine, with inexplicable difficulties; the acceptance of it is at once not only a justification of the ways of God to man, but a demonstration of the wisdom and love of God in Christ such as nothing else could furnish. Under the system of atonement, the greatness of this depravity stands not in the way of God's mercy, but is a glorious occasion for its exercise.

And here comes in the great law of deliverance growing out of Christ's redeeming interposition; the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, setting us free from the law of sin and death. The great glory of it is that it conquers our voluntary evil nature, and sets us free from the law of it, by the introduction in its place, or the exchange for it, of an equally voluntary holy nature in Christ. The evil nature has Satan to set it on fire, to tempt it, to co-operate with it; but the holy nature has Christ as its origin and support, and is a participation in Christ's own nature. The work of grace shall conquer the work of depravity; the law of the Spirit of life in Christ shall set free the soul from the law of sin and death. Nothing else could do it, nothing external to the soul; no outward law of excellence could do it, nothing that did not work within the soul as a living principle of life and action. By this new principle introduced, this new determination of the will in accord-

ance with divine grace, the man is set free from the evil dispositions of the unregenerate heart, from its inbred, habitual, long cherished, long growing, and powerful corruptions; he is set at liberty to serve God out of love, no longer bound in slavery to the law of sin and death in an evil nature. This is the great deliverance; this is freedom indeed; instead of the death *of* sin, a death *to* sin, a redemption from its indwelling power by the working of an opposite power of holiness and life, which, as Christ's own life, imparted to the soul, becomes the *habit* of the soul. But it is too low an expression when we say *imparted to the soul*, for in order to work this freedom, this regeneration, this new creature-ship in Christ, Christ himself takes up his abode within the soul, and works in it. So the man says—this freeman of Christ—I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. This new life in the soul is not only a life *in* Christ, but the life *of* Christ. Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, liberty from the bondage of corruption, from the law of sin and death, liberty of life, liberty of holiness, liberty to serve God, not as a slave but as a child, not with the Spirit of bondage to fear, but with the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father. And thus the Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit that we are the children of God; carries, as it were, our spirit, as the fruit of Christ dwelling and living in us, to God, for a witness that we are God's children.

By this law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, we are set free not only from the law of sin and death in our depraved natures, but also from the condemnation of God's law. We are set free from God's law as a law of sin and death, and in that freedom are brought back under God's law as a law of holiness. We are brought back to serve the law in newness of spirit, spontaneously, out of love, not out of fear; from gratitude and faith, as an offering of the fruit of love, the fruit of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and not as a task, a work of the law, a merit. It is a work

of love obeying the law, a work of the Spirit of Christ showing the transformation of the heart in conformity with the law, in obedience, inward, inwrought, permanent, spiritual, spontaneous obedience to the will of God; obedience from the Spirit in the heart; not from the hand of the law laid upon the heart, or the rod held over it, but from that Spirit of holiness, of which the law is merely the expression, that Spirit of holiness as free as heaven, and which itself would learn to obey the law as God's will, or carry it into act as the expression of love to him, and as the work of holy freedom, even if it were not written in God's Word, nor expressed in precept. The work of the law is accomplished in love, even though there were no obligation of direct command. Love forestals command, love performs duty from delight, from spontaneous devotion, before the question of duty comes up, and not waiting for the pressure of the law or the urgency of conscience.

Now there is no language that can fully describe the blessedness of this religion, the religion of justification by faith, the religion of love; and its infinite superiority over every form of religion by works, the religion of compulsion and of fear, to which men are driven by conscience without love. Every form of religion by works, salvation by works, is a denial and rejection of the gospel, and a dismal, scrupulous, slavish system. It is a religion of bargain and purchase, and not of love, a religion of selfishness from beginning to end, and a destruction of the very possibility of disinterestedness. When a man's religion becomes one of merit, so much done and so much demanded for it, all true merit is annihilated, the merit of love, and of self-consecration. The moment you introduce the idea of merit as the purchase of salvation, you destroy the idea of piety, the conception of holiness. You reduce holiness down to the level of a commercial traffic. Your holiness might be like that of an angel, but if you maintain it for reward, as merit, to entitle you to an inheritance,

and not out of love, surely you do it not for God. You may do it for God's reward, for God's salvation, for God's heaven, but not for God. And if you do that to make merit for yourself, to procure safety for yourself, to purchase an inheritance of happiness for yourself which you would not do from love, or which you *do* not do from love, what does this prove but selfishness? You are proceeding on mercantile principles, as you might give a sum of fifty thousand dollars for the construction of a ship to promote your interests, which sum you would never dream of giving to your workmen without the equivalent returned.

On mercantile principles, in the case of men with fellow men, this is just enough and honest; but in your relation to God, to whom you owe supreme love, and all things in love, it would be naught but selfishness. As a merchant with God, the balances of deceit and of selfishness are in your hands. For, you are merely God's steward, to take care of his goods, and you cannot be a merchant with him, for you have nothing of your own to offer him, nothing of your own to give him, but your own heart, and that *belongs* to him, that you *owe* him; and you can have no merit in giving him that which is his own, you can demand nothing from him in return for that which belongs to him. If you do *not* give it to him, you withhold from him that which is his due; you rob God; and if you give it to him merely because you bargain for a reward, it is a transaction of mere selfishness; it is no longer the *heart* that you give him, for you destroy the heart in this transaction, and take away the possibility of love, by making it a purchase of benefits, an offering for reward. It is on your part a deceitful transaction, for you profess to bring your heart, while the terms on which you bring it make it anything but a heart. The stipulation for reward takes everything of heart out of the transaction. It is a mercantile transaction. So it is none but Christ that can put a heart into your offering, the heart of faith and love, and he

does that merely of his own free grace, and justifies you on his own merits, not yours.

Now suppose we take a very simple, obvious, familiar illustration. Here is a basket of peaches, which you have reared with great care in your own garden to present them to a dear friend, to whom you are under obligation for inestimable favors, to whom indeed you owe it that you have a house to live in and a garden to cultivate. Your friend does not need your offering, but your offering, though small, is a thing of love. It is precious for that only. It has no worth, even in your own eyes, but as a gift of love. There is no other motive in it but gratitude and love. It was your friend, whose great kindness made it possible for you to be the possessor of that garden, and while you feel that you have exerted all possible care in getting this basket of fruit in all possible perfection to present to your benefactor, after all, it is of his own that you have given him. It is nothing but love that makes it precious. It is an offering of gratitude and love.

Now here is another man with a basket of fine ripe peaches, better, perhaps, in themselves, than yours, which he purchased, as of peculiar rarity, at a great expense, and is going to present them to the same friend, your friend, because he also expects, or is trying to gain from him, a great favor. There is a lawsuit pending, in which is involved this man's whole fortune, and by some mysterious means, this your friend is able to procure a decision either for or against this man; and this basket of costly fruit is one of the many bribes by which he is seeking to win his favor. Now is there any value as an offering, in that costly fruit? Suppose the man is guilty, and takes this mode of gaining favor as a guilty man, and your kind friend knows it. Will he take the fruit? No, he will not take it, he cannot, as an upright judge, take it. Yet he took yours, and this man's seems superior, and cost much more. But a cup of cold water from you, out of gratitude and love, would be of more value to your friend than all

the fruits from the other that could be purchased with the wealth of Cresus.

Now here is just a simple symbol of the difference between a religion of works apart from Christ, and a religion of faith and love. Your basket of fruit, which is the gift of gratitude and love, represents the offering of the heart and life to God under the influence of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, setting the soul free from the law of sin and death, and producing a spontaneous and humble piety, as fruit, not as merit, as an offering of gratitude and love, not a purchase of favor. The other basket represents the offering of a guilty conscience, not reconciled to God in Christ, not believing and not forgiven, but seeking forgiveness and eternal life by the deeds of the law, by the observances of an artificial morality, as the ground on which heaven is to be granted. Say it were Luther in his cell scourging himself, and fasting, and giving alms, and praying night and day by the force of a restless conscience and a restless anxiety for peace with God. What is Luther doing, but gathering a basket of costly fruit to offer, instead of faith in Christ, as a bribe or purchase-offering to the Judge of all the earth, for pardon, peace, and admittance to heaven? Is this piety? O no! it is the working of the law of sin and death.

What then can be done? Cannot Luther help himself? Is there nothing that he can do to extricate himself, and can none of the priests help him, and are all his weeping self-denials, and even a pilgrimage to Rome, and the blessing of the Pope, and all harrowing austerities that make men look on him with pity, of no avail? Of none but to discover sin. Luther can do nothing. He has tried the path of self-help, and it has brought him again to be stunned with the thunders and burned with the lightnings of Sinai, and there is nothing that he can do. No! But he can fall helpless into the arms of his Redeemer, and arise a new man, a man of grace, a man justified by faith; and this every man must do, or he is lost. He hears and

understands the import of that powerful sentence, The just shall live by faith; he falls prostrate before his Saviour, submissive, heart-broken, penitent, believing; and from that moment the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets him free from the law of sin and of death, and makes him one of the mightiest, cheerfulest, heartiest apostles of the glorious free gospel of life by faith that has trodden the earth since the day of Pentecost. And is not this a most wondrous, most triumphant deliverance and transformation? And who, that can experience the same, can be willing to remain as the slave of Satan, beneath the condemnation of God's law around and above him, and in the power of the law of sin and of death within him?

In the work of our salvation, Christ must do all, everything, absolutely all.

> Banish every vain pretence,
> Built on human excellence.
> Perish everything in man,
> But the grace that never can!

There can be no such thing as purchase, no such thing as merit, no such thing as disinterested motive, no such thing as gratitude and love, and consequently, no such thing as true morality, apart from Christ, nor until the exercise of Christ's forgiving mercy, until the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes the soul free from the law of sin and of death. The religion preached in the gospel is one entirely of free grace, grace free in the gift, grace that makes free in the exercise; Christ Jesus is not a half-Saviour, leaving our works to do the rest; for our best works, even when we have been forgiven, tried by the law, would condemn us again, and he must save us from our very works of piety, as well as our ways of sin, from the guilt of our very efforts to obey the law, as well as from the condemnation of the law originally. In all things we must be new creatures in Christ Jesus, who of God is

nade unto us our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, edemption.

How lost was my condition,
  Till Jesus made me whole!
There is but one Physician
  Can cure the sin-sick soul!
Next door to death he found me,
  And snatched me from the grave,
To tell to all around me
  His wondrous power to save.

From men great skill professing
  I thought a cure to gain,
But this proved more distressing,
  And added to my pain:
Some said that nothing ailed me;
  Some gave me up for lost;
Thus every refuge failed me
  And all my hopes were crossed.

At length this great Physician,
  How matchless is his grace!
Accepted my petition,
  And undertook my case:
First gave me sight to view Him,
  For sin my sight had sealed;
Then bade me look unto Him;
  I looked, and I was healed!

A dying, risen Jesus,
  Seen by the eye of Faith,
At once from anguish frees us,
  And saves the soul from death.
Come then to this Physician;
  His help he'll freely give;
He makes no hard condition;
  'Tis only look, and live!

NEWTON.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Cross daily.—The Morality of Faith the only true and constant Morality. —Faith the element of power in Prayer.

We have already dwelt somewhat at large on the duty of coming to Christ, and what is implied in it, the nature of a living faith, and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. But this is only the beginning of spiritual life. Coming to Christ is one thing, following Christ daily is another. We have dwelt upon the vanity, worthlessness, and selfishness of all morality away from Christ, or regarded as the means of coming to him. Human morality is a bridge over the gulf of our depravity, of which you may advance even to the centre, but will find it sawed off. And the virtues with which we think to swim the stream are only as floating bladders that carry us beyond our depth, and then break, and let us down into the deep of our own iniquities. Every refuge of lies, every relief from an angry conscience, every attempt to flee from hell and enter heaven, without Christ, is as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand upon the wall, and a serpent stung him. Every staff without Christ is a broken, sharp, poisonous reed, that pierces the soul.

We must now dwell, in contrast with this, upon the exceeding value, the blessedness, and the absolute necessity of a holy morality, which is the *effect* of coming to Christ, the proof that the soul *has* come to him, and the

essential business of following him. It is one thing to come to Christ by faith; we cannot do that by morality, though we had the morality of an angel; we cannot come by any holiness of our own, having none to come by. But it is another thing to *follow* Christ, which we cannot do without a holy morality that shall be the fruit of faith and love, the product of God working in us both to will and to do. Christianity stands on the proudest elevation of pure morality, that is, the Christianity of justification by faith, true Christianity, above every other form and appearance of goodness. Christianity begins with nothing, but embraces and produces everything. Self-reliance begins with everything, and ends in nothing. Follow Christ; that will make morality, that will produce works. Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Lamb! the sole morality is love of Thee! Follow Christ. You cannot follow him without a religion of works, the soul and heavenly inspiration of which is faith and love. Come to Christ, that you may receive grace from him; come empty, that you may be filled; come worthless, that in him you may be made worthy; come ignorant, that in him you may be enlightened; come without works, that in him you may be made rich in good works.

Having come thus to Christ, you are, in the same dependent manner, to follow him; and a great point in the morality which you are thus to sustain, a morality and self-denial which must have Christ as its Inspirer or it is worthless, is this, that it is a *daily* morality, a daily self-denial, a daily following of Christ. The work of religion is not a work that is performed at once for a lifetime, by coming to Christ; but in it you are to wait on him, to observe his movements, his ways, his words, his example, continually. If there is an air of strictness and severity in this work of self-denial *daily*, there is also great encouragement in the daily cross, encouragement in its *dailiness*. You are not required to accomplish all at once, but to follow on. You are not to have all the light at

once, but to follow on. Sufficient unto the day is the grace and strength thereof. You can follow Christ, only by the same grace that brought you to him; but, trusting in him, *that* is always vouchsafed.

Some persons seem to be always trembling at the thought of the mightiness of becoming a Christian, concentrating in their own minds, in the idea of becoming a Christian, almost the whole amount of a lifetime of self-denial, conflict, effort, watchfulness, work upon self and others. But that is all to be left to Christ and his grace. All the strength necessary for future obedience must be given by him, and when the time comes for its exercise, he will give it to the soul that is waiting on him. But at present you have only present duty to perform. You are to follow Christ for to-day; that is duty, that is Christianity. Christ must renew your strength *every* day, and every day you must come to him, saying, Give us *this* day our daily bread. If you think that becoming a Christian requires in you the exercise of a grace and strength sufficient to last you through life, it is a great mistake indeed. Becoming a Christian requires only present submission and trust, a willing heart, and a waiting on the Saviour *now*, without any respect to the future, except in the article of trusting in him for it. Out of that present trust springs the future. You are not required to produce the future, but to put the seed of it into the ground, as Christ gives it to you. The husbandman is not required to produce the harvest, but to begin with the first steps and to follow on, trusting in the Lord of the harvest. Your trust and obedience to-day are the seed and bud of to-morrow, and out of the blossoms of to-morrow shall spring other buds and blossoms, and so on, until your daily existence shall be filled with fruit unto life eternal. The man who trusts in the Lord shall be like a tree planted by a river, her roots always nourished with moisture, her leaf ever green, not careful in the year of drought, nor ever ceasing at all from yielding fruit.

But all this is the quiet growth of faith and patience. It is not required at once, nor possible at once, but only the *principle of it*, ceaselessly working. Miss Jane Taylor's story of the discontented pendulum, is admirable in this application; we would call it, for our purpose, the unbelieving pendulum. Reflecting upon the amount of future duty it had to perform, and going into a calculation what number of times it must swing every hour, and multiplying that by the hours in the day, and then the days in the month, and then the months in the year, and finding what an enormous multitude of times it must strike with the most perfect precision, punctuality, and perseverance in the year, ceaseless, always at its duty,—it was so distressed and terrified with the responsibility, that it suddenly stopped; nor could the clock be set in motion again, till the pendulum was reminded that though in a year's time it would of course perform so many vibrations, if faithful, yet it was never called to perform but just so many in a minute, and only one in each present second, and that it had nothing to do with the future, but to take care of the present. Take care of the minutes, and the hours will take care of themselves. And just so, take care of the days in Christ's service, day by day, in the minute duties of following Christ, and the months and years will take care of themselves. Christ will keep the clock in motion to-morrow, if the pendulum obeys him to-day. Each day we are to come to him for each day's grace.

Sometimes a soul with a trembling hope that it has been born again is so pressed with a sense of the greatness of being a true Christian, and of following Christ faithfully, and perhaps so tempted of Satan with unbelief, and needless causes of fright, that it shrinks back from the duty of a public profession of faith in the Saviour, and thus gives the adversary of the soul a great advantage. Instead of looking to this present step of duty, as a step that comes right in the highway of following Christ, a step included in the present business of taking up the cross daily and

following him, such persons are sometimes looking to the great things that are to be expected of them, or that will be duty for them, in after life, and so they halt, hesitate, tremble, and stop in confusion.

Sometimes they never get over this difficulty; giving way to their fears at first, fear instead of faith becomes the habit of the mind, and they never enjoy Christ, nor ever conquer sin, because they never go forth trustingly to follow Christ, taking up his cross daily, and casting all their care on him for time to come. They never go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach. They look at the future with fear and unbelief, instead of looking simply at the present, with humble, trustful obedience, concerning themselves with present duty. If they would take the present steps of duty that are plain, others would be plain in succession, and easy also, as fast as they come up to them. But it is foolish, wrong, and unbelieving, to burden the present with more than belongs to the present. Christ does not say, Let a man take up the crosses of all the days in the next year, and follow me, but his daily cross, the cross of each day, as it comes. If a man had a long journey before him, and a burden to carry in the first stage, and another burden in the second stage, and another in the third, and so on, and he should send forward, and have the burden belonging to the second or third stage in his pilgrimage brought back to be taken up at the first stage, he would never go on, never even set out. Just so it is with all our duties, and all our undertakings.

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, the labor thereof, and the grace thereof. We are permitted, in general, to see only the beginning; if we saw the whole, before habits of great faith, prayer, and energy were formed in us by God's gradual grace, and by gradually coping with difficulties as they come up, we should be frightened, and deterred from duty. If a little child could count the multitude of steps it would have to take in growing up to manhood, it would stop learning to walk. If a

boy at school could calculate the multitude of steps he would have to take, the multitude of distinct efforts of attention and will it would cost him to master the science of Algebra, or the Greek language, he would throw down his mathematics and his dictionary in despair. If a young minister of the gospel were told at his ordination that in such a number of years, living so long, he would have to prepare say one thousand sermons, and were to get his mind morbidly fixed upon that, he would stop at once. If the children of Israel had been told, when they undertook to go out of Egypt for Canaan, that they would have to wander forty years in the wilderness, they would not have stirred a step. But God makes everything gradual to us, and by present faith, everything easy, everything leading on gently and without violence to the next thing, the next duty; like a running stream and not a rough sea; like the changes of the seasons, imperceptible in their progress from day to day, yet perfect and complete; impossible to bear, if they come suddenly, but healthful and delightful in their quiet approaches, and gliding gradually into one another. So duties grow out of duties, gradually and gently, and Christian graces and self-denials glide into one another like the braids of a silken chain; and by this chain of love and duty the soul is bound about, and strengthened, in and for Christ. Only trust in Christ, and follow him.

As it is with duty, so it is with light. It does not come all at once, but gradually. But Christ's rule is, He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. And the path of the just, the just who live by faith, is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. But you cannot expect all your light now; enough, if you have a little of it; enough, if you have sufficient to see to-day's duties, to-day's path. You are not to be anxious either about light or comfort for the future, but anxious only to follow Christ truly for this day. Follow Christ, and comfort will follow you; but if

you follow comfort chiefly, you will lose sight both of comfort and of Christ.

The cross daily, and *follow me.* Daily duties are not only to be performed, but performed daily in obedience to Christ, with a supreme regard to him, under the power of his love. Everything must be done for Christ, done in following him; that is the main point. Taking the cross daily would be no piety at all, except in following Christ. If you separate the cross from Christ and his love, and put it in any other service, you make another religion than that of Christianity. The end and right way of all duties, all self-denials, all crosses, is simply, Follow me. Follow Christ daily. Walk as he walked, daily. Seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, daily. Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ, daily. Walk in love, as he also hath loved us, daily. It is manifest that this precept runs into the minutest actions and feelings of life, daily life, domestic life, social life, business life, public life, private life. Let your daily deportment, conversation, temper, and disposition of mind, habitudes of existence, be a copy of the same sweet and lovely holiness, which shone in the daily life of Christ. Each day must have the Christian graces woven into it, running through it, the threads of the great pattern continued, the colors visible, the figures growing; precept upon precept, line upon line coming out, here a little, and there a little. See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the Mount.

We are here reminded of the manufacture of the rich Gobelin Tapestry. When they undertake a piece, they have the subject, the original figure, from the hand of a great master, constantly before them, and every thread, every shade of color, is put in with reference to that, and so the work goes on patiently, little by little, day by day, till it is finished. But if they did not daily study the original picture, having it constantly before them, and doing everything with reference to that, they would at

once go astray. They might produce a picture of some sort, but it would not be the copy or resemblance of the great picture given them for their pattern. So with the character of Christ, which we are to imitate and follow. Everything in us daily must grow up into him, who is the Head. Everything must be done with reference to him; nor is there anything so small or unimportant, which may not bear its proportionate shade of sweet coloring drawn from him. The daily conquests of our temper, the daily patience, meekness, charity of spirit and of action, the daily gentlenesses, kindnesses, forbearances, forgivenesses of life, the daily experiments and practices of faith, the daily services of grace in prayer, the daily lookings to Christ, like the flower that follows the sun, the daily submissions of everything to him, the daily effort to find him, and to grow in his knowledge and love, the daily feeding on a portion of his Word, the daily endeavor to do good as we have opportunity, winning souls to Christ, the daily attention to our business under Christ's love, the daily subduing and denial of self, in bringing everything to him, for him and not self to stamp and seal it as his own, imbuing it with his Spirit, the daily rejoicing in his goodness, and thanksgiving for his mercy;—all these things daily, and all these things each day for itself, and not put off to the morrow, nor the morrow thrown upon to-day. Our work for Christ and our walk with him are to be continued daily. Each day we do not know that we shall have another morrow, do not know but that this may be the last of our sweet privilege of walking with Christ, and working for him. It is perhaps but a little that we can do in a day, but a little every day will accomplish much in a year, and we are not required to crowd a year into a day, but to take the days, as they come, and by giving each one to Christ, to string them all, as it were, in one thread of precious pearls for him. By and by you will find them in your own coronet of life.

We have said that if we separate the cross from Christ

and his love, and put it in any other service, we make another religion than that of Christianity. This may be done in various ways, such as those designated by the Apostle under the names of will-worship, and voluntary humiliations and mortifications, and the worshipping of saints and angels as the way into heaven, or the purchase thereof. Some men put the mere image of the cross in the place of him who suffered for our sins upon it; and some put devotion to the cross as a form, in place of the love of Christ constraining us. Some misguided souls deny themselves for the Virgin, some for the grandeur of St. Peter, some to get an interest in the prayers of some patron saint, and some to build, in one mode and another, a stairway of merit to climb towards heaven. But perhaps the greatest example of false self-denial the world ever saw is that of the Jesuits, who have sometimes made a wonderful use of the principle of self-abnegation under the cloak of religion, for earthly purposes. In this order, and in the Romanism from which it issued, we can show the most complete sacrifice of self to an earthly master, producing miracles of morality, self-denial, alms-giving, zeal, martyrdom, bodies to be burned. Their rule is, not, Follow Christ, but, Follow your superior, as a dead body, governed by him, in obedience, not to be questioned, to him. Be as a dead body, in respect to any will of your own. Ask no questions, but obey. They carried this principle out so fully, linking it to the throne of Rome, and binding the wills of many into one iron will for the sway of that throne, that they shook the world by it.

The same energy carried to Christ, the same training of submission to him, would have been salvation to every one of them; but carried to any other than him, it was death. The sacrifice of their own will for any other than Christ, and out of any motive but love and duty to him, was the destruction of their being for ever. Their trust was in a human Saviour. They applied to human beings and a human system that supreme consercation of the will and

confidence of the soul, which God claims exclusively and solely for himself, and which for another to arrogate is blasphemy. Cursed be the man who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For a man to divest himself of his own moral responsibility, by throwing it on a fallen creature, and not trusting it with God, is impiety and idolatry. It renders true piety impossible, and sin inevitable. Hence the confidence of misguided souls in giving up the matter of their salvation to be taken care of by priests, as paid spiritual lawyers in the chancery of heaven, is eternal ruin. The disposition to do this, in one way and another, is profound in the human mind; and hence the reiteration in God's Word, under so many forms, of the truth, that besides Christ alone there is no Saviour.

Now whether the rule be that of the Jesuits, or whether it be put in the more general form, Follow the church;—if that be the ultimate resort, standard, and authority, it cuts the soul off effectually from God, introduces another Saviour than Christ, and is, in fact, another gospel. It makes no difference whether the soul trust in a system or an individual, or whether its supreme allegiance be bound to a system or an individual; if the system or the individual occupies the place of Christ, arrogates the authority of Christ, and stands between the soul and Christ, the soul is destroyed by it. The Jesuits say, Follow your superior. Deny thyself, take the cross, and follow and sustain your order and its laws. Are the Jesuits good men for this? They have sometimes sacrificed everything in a blind obedience; but when they have gone into desert regions, and effectually abnegated self for their order and for the Romish Church, is that religion, or any part of it? It is self-denial, indeed, but not being for Christ, is robbery of God, and an exaltation of man and machinery into the place of the Saviour. It is self-denial, indeed, but self-denial by itself is not piety. A man may deny himself, and take the cross, but if he does not follow Christ, he

might just as well have indulged himself; indeed his self-denial without Christ is but another form of self-indulgence. This human system of self-denial makes a slave, a stone, a dead body; but Christ makes a freeman. This human system may be, in one sense, the annihilation of self-will, but Christ's system, Christ's love, is the turning of the will into his service, the imbuing of it with his love, the freeing it from self, evil self, and making it to choose freely, in love, Christ's service. There is no such rule in Christianity, nor anything like it, as this Jesuitical and Romish principle, which indeed is the most subtle artifice that Satan ever invented to bind souls to himself. For, whatever a man does after such self-abnegation, after such renunciation of his own will, after such a quittance of his own responsibility, he justifies, and quiets himself, and blinds his conscience, though it were murder, theft, intrigue, false witness, all the malice of hell in operation. It is turning the truth into a lie, and doing evil that good may come; whose damnation is just. It is tearing the soul from its allegiance to God, and setting up another God, another conscience, so that he, as God, setteth himself in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is a God.

For an honest and humble mind, taking the Word of God for its guide, and not human rule or tradition, there is no danger of mistaking any such system for God's system. Our Lord Jesus has made supreme, undivided, single, entire consecration to himself, and himself alone, so clearly our whole duty, and himself so indisputably our sole Saviour and Guide, that there is no possibility of mistake. Come unto me, follow me, abide in me. Everything is personal, single; me, me, me. Not, come to the church, follow the church, abide in the church; nor, come to a system, follow a system, abide in a system, maintain the rules of a system; nor even, follow the cross, come to the cross, abide in the cross;—but, Come to me, follow me, abide in me. Take up the cross daily, and follow me. Everything begins with this, Come to me, and ends with

this, Follow me. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. He that believeth in me shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life. He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honor. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world for my sake, shall keep it unto life eternal. Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. But the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely. The book of life itself is the LAMB'S book of life; the souls written in it are Christ's own souls; the love that is their principle of life is Christ's own love. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Now one would think that there is no mind with any right view whatever of spiritual things, but must be charmed with the simplicity and delightfulness of Christianity, as being such a manifestation of Christ all and in all. All things are in and of and for and through and to him, in order that no flesh may glory in his presence, nothing of man's pride or contrivance be exalted, but that he that glorieth might glory in the Lord. A Pagan philosopher is said once to have answered to the question, What is God doing? "He is putting down the proud and exalting the humble;" a wonderful answer for a Pagan, and which might make us think that much more than a Pagan had to do with it. For this is the very beauty and excellence of the gospel, that it puts down self and pride, and makes men rich by making them humble. And it makes them humble only by bringing them to Christ, rich only in him, peaceful only in him, but in him gives them

the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

How blessed to have a religion in which all the variety of duty can be brought to one single, simple thing, Follow Christ! No rent-roll of ceremonies, penances, and traditions of men is presented; but one single, simple duty, Follow Christ. And what a weight of motive behind this duty, to press the soul onward into it, and what an opening of heaven, and beckoning of God, angels and saints, the whole encompassing cloud of witnesses, to animate and encourage the soul in steadfast faithfulness, even to the end! Lost out of Christ, saved only in him! The whole business of our existence is comprehended in this one thing, to find Christ. It were infinitely better not to have been, than to be without Christ. We make existence itself instead of a blessing, an eternal curse without Christ. We are hastening, beneath the burden of sin, in the death of trespasses and sins, with nothing but the elements of retribution within us, and the principles of retribution as laws upon us, without Christ, to the fires of the great day,

> That Day of wrath, that dreadful day,
> When heaven and earth shall pass away,
> What power shall be the sinner's stay!

CHAPTER XXVI.

Faith, the element of power in Prayer.—Imaginary Prayer.—Dreaming of flying.—Wandering thoughts in Prayer.—The incalculable importance of right *habits*, as fixtures of the soul in Prayer.

Now this daily following of Christ, this daily life of faith, cannot be a reality, cannot exist at all, without a daily habit of secret prayer. Faith is the element of prayer, definite and constant. Faith in God's Word, in God's holiness, justice, mercy; in the law and the gospel; in sin, death, the judgment, eternity, heaven, hell; faith in the Lord Jesus, and in his righteousness, and in his all sufficiency and mercy to the chief of sinners; faith as the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; faith as the realization to the soul both of the Lord Jesus Christ and of his love, and of those eternal things which he has unveiled and made so definite, to move the soul; and faith in Christ, as an humble, trusting, submissive reliance of the soul, on him; faith, in all these directions, in all these forms, is the grand element of power in prayer. Faith in the burden of sin upon a man's own soul, as God has described it in his Word, will give a man power in prayer; faith in self, as revealed of God, and in God as made known in Christ, will give a man power in prayer; faith in sin and in the penalty, producing an agonized conscience, will give a man power in prayer; faith in the promises of God, faith in the blood of Christ, faith in Jesus as a Saviour, will give a man power in

prayer. Faith in the value of the soul, and in its eternal ruin out of Christ, and in the lost condition of a world lying in wickedness, will give a man power in prayer. And in fine, it is faith in the Lord Jesus as a personal Saviour, faith in the Cross of Christ, the sufferings, death, and love of Christ, and in all the truths that cluster around that amazing transaction and depend upon it, the truths that like Christ himself, and in Christ himself, are lifted up upon the Cross to the view of all the universe, and for all men to be drawn unto them in that position; it is this faith, and only this, that can constitute the essence and the life of prayer, that can give power in prayer, that can quicken and sustain in the soul the element of prayer, that can feed the flame of prayer. It is this, and only this, that ever did, can, or will, form in the soul the sacred, ceaseless HABIT of prayer, and by the instrumentality of prayer, through the grace of the Divine Regenerating Spirit, make the life of the soul to be a life hid with Christ in God.

Now without anything, in the reality, of this element of Faith, any experience of its power as the element of prayer, its wings uplifting the soul as angels' in audience with the Deity, there is in many a man's mind, at times, the imagination that he prays. And indeed, it is quite common to hear from a man who does not by any means seek to follow Christ daily, language something like the following, when the subject of personal religion is urged upon the individual's notice. "I think I *do* pray. I have not, indeed, joined the Church, and my form of prayer may not be just in accordance with yours, but I think upon God and religious things, and I am sure that God is everywhere, and that we are commanded to pray always; and when a man's heart goes up to God anywhere, *that* is prayer, and if a man is honestly endeavoring to perform his duty daily, *that* is prayer, and the best kind of prayer." Now, dear friend, you must allow us to correct a step or two in your argument; for it is a strain of loose and careless thinking which we may often hear expressed, and

constitutes a way that some men have of excusing even to their own consciences their entire neglect of everything like real prayer. The endeavor to perform one's duty daily before God and to follow Christ daily, is the fruit of prayer, and prayer itself is a main part of such following of Christ; but the endeavor to arrange one's external life properly is not itself prayer, and never was, and never will be. Neither, when a man's heart seems going up to God everywhere, is it certain that *that* is prayer; for it may be a mere intellectual aspiration after God, accompanied by the sentimental aspirations of a heart tastefully educated; just such as the feeling with which a refined heart and mind might read the Poet Thomson's Hymn on the Seasons, and admire its devout ascriptions to the God of the rolling year, without one emotion of true piety, or aspiration of true prayer in the soul.

Neither does mere thinking upon God and religious things constitute prayer; by no means. Meditation is not prayer, though it may be a preparation for it, and an accompaniment of it. Thinking pleasantly upon the subject of religion is not prayer. Reading the Bible is not prayer. Abstracting the soul from earthly things is not prayer. Silence in the soul is not prayer. The quietness of the will is not prayer. There may be a great deal of abstraction, and a great deal of silence, and a great deal of quietness, and yet not prayer. The mere going out of the unclean spirit from a man for a season, to look about him in dry places, is not prayer. There is often such a lull in the winds of a man's evil passions, and a calm upon the troubled sea, when he *might* pray, if he would, and pray with great success and blessedness; but many a time he thinks the calm itself is a wonderful reformation, a state of prayer, or as good as that, and so he does nothing, and the devil and the winds come back, with more power of possession than before. Just as if a calm in a man's passions, that often die away for the present by mere exhaustion, or that by reason of monotony or discontent

seek a dry place for a season, were going to carry a man to heaven, were the work of religion in his heart! Oh, no! There is an infinite difference between a temporary lull of passion in a man's soul, and the breathings of the Divine Spirit; between the quietness of a man's will for a season, and the setting up of God's will in the heart; between silence in the soul, and positive communion with God.

The state and atmosphere of prayer is a far higher region than this, a region into which a man never will rise by the mere thinking of God. A man will do many things in the state and atmosphere of earth, and undergo much hard work in various ways, by which he may endeavor to persuade himself that he is a child of God, and a man of prayer; and yet may never spread the wings of his soul, and fly up into that higher region in actual communion with God, in actual prayer. Aye, the leaden atmosphere of earth weighs down those wings, and the long habits of spiritual indolence, and self-indulgence, and religious procrastination, are wound like cords round about those wings, so that a man will not spread them, and self-love with self-deception glues them to a man's earthly shoulders, so that he walks about in sin, in neglect of God, in destitution of all faith and all communion with heaven, and only *dreams* that he is flying. Who has not had such experiences in the night-visions, when he has gone careering in the air like a swift eagle, and then also perhaps has dropped like a stone to the earth, not able to lift one foot above another! This dreaming of flying is something like many persons dreaming of prayer.

But this flying in one's dreams is not the patient walking after Christ daily. Prayer is a definite thing. It is the daily expression of our wants, the making known of our wants to our Father in Heaven, and the earnest, humble seeking for a supply of them. Prayer is the absolute necessity of a sin-sick, dying, ruined soul, casting itself on Almighty Redeemer for mercy. Prayer is the fervor

of a soul wrestling for an eternal blessing. Mere silence in the soul is not prayer. There would be error in those lines of the Poet:—

> Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
> Uttered or *unexpressed;*

were it not that the whole hymn is composed on the supposition of a Christian soul maintaining its special, particular seasons of prayer to God daily, with the expression of its wants and desires, as definite as it can make them. Without such a habit, formed and maintained daily in the soul, as a fixture of the daily life, there will be no such thing as unexpressed desires after God. There will be no such thing as a *spirit* of prayer, there never is, without special, daily *seasons* of prayer. Prayer is the *motion* of a hidden fire, that burns within the breast; it is the *motion* of that fire ascending up to God, the expression of it. There must be words, and there must be daily seasons to express them, and then the fire will keep burning, even in the interval of time when the words are not uttered. Take with you words, says the Prophet, and go to God. After this manner pray ye. Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and pray to thy Father which is in secret. Give us this day our daily bread. Definite desires, definite petitions, definite seasons sacredly maintained, constitute the life of prayer.

Some imaginary general believers, amidst their neglect and disregard of the particulars of Christianity, may possibly say, I am praying all the time; I can pray as well with my head upon my pillow, or walking down Broadway, or in the Strand, as in the most secret retirement; which is a fool's thought, and no better than dreaming of flying; and indeed, if that be all a man's praying, he is most certainly walking down Broadway. You may sometimes hear it said of others, who have died at the close of what is called a moral life, although they have never professed or perhaps imagined

any particular attachment to Christ in that life, or any faith in his atoning blood, that the *life* of such an one was prayer. It is a wild, unbelieving dream and delusion. Before any man can begin to have any such thing true in any measure whatever, he must have formed the secret habit daily of prayer at definite seasons, in definite words, in definite desires that themselves produce the words. In forming that habit, every man will meet with temptations and difficulties. Wandering thoughts will have to be restrained. Impatience, weariness, coldness, unbelief, interruptions, neglects, heartlessness, will work fearfully upon the soul, will strive to eat out the heart of a man's piety in prayer, will crowd upon him to jostle him away from the throne of grace; but he must press on through evil report and good report, or the habit of prayer will never be formed, and the spirit of prayer will never abide in the soul.

It is for want of an exceedingly zealous attentiveness to these things, and watchfulness over them, in the formation of a strong, deep *habit* of following Christ daily in prayer, that so many Christians lose all the enjoyment and beauty of a life of faith, if they do not take up with a hope of heaven utterly delusive. The heart wanders from God inevitably, if it do not abide in Christ daily in earnest prayer. And when these heart-wanderings have become a habit, they then become the heart's whole life. The *forms* of religion, of church and household piety, may be maintained awhile, for the profession of a Christian may continue to bind him to those performances, even when the heart is gone, but they become *mere* forms. Their maintenance is heartless, and without joy. The soul does not meet God in his sanctuary, nor at the family-altar, nor in secret prayer. These duties are without zest, without delight, without unction. The *phrases* of piety may be repeated, and they may be the same expressions which once flowed from the heart, grew out of God's Spirit in the heart, and were full of heart-warmth and life;

but now the lips repeat them, while there is no experience of their meaning, no corresponding sense of them in the soul. They are like a collection of wax figures in the place of living beings. The use of such expressions does not recall the experience indicated by them, nor restore the soul to a living knowledge of their realities; no more than a man can, by sitting in the arm-chair of a dear departed friend, call back the lost one into life; no more than a man could, by kneeling at the tomb of a dead saint, be animated by his living fervor. The phrases of piety, in such a case, are as a dead language, or as the exponents of a science not understood, or as the nomenclature of philosophy to a heathen. The *duties* of piety likewise, as well as the expressions, are equally a mere formalism, perhaps they become an absolute hypocrisy.

The profession of a Christian, whose heart has thus gone out of his piety, or whose piety he has let go out of his heart, may keep him appearing as a Christian, standing among other Christians as a Christian, a long time; just as a very thick bark will long keep a rotten tree standing erect amidst other trees, in the forest. And this thick rind or bark of the forms of piety may keep a man a great while from the discovery of his inward rottenness, when, if the bark had dropped off just in proportion as the rottenness came on, his inward state would have stood disclosed both to himself and others. Just suppose the case of a man accustomed to a prayer-book and a liturgy, or to any set expressions of piety, having his tongue suddenly palsied at every phrase which his heart had ceased to understand and to accompany; or suppose that instead of the expressions of pious feeling, when his heart has wandered away from God, his lips should utter just what his heart is filled with, instead of his accustomed forms of prayer. Suppose that there were such a law in a man's being, that his inward departures from God should be followed by an external inability to pronounce the words of that religious experience, which he has suffered to decay.

His forms of piety and prayer would then, instead of serving for a concealment, be the judgment and conviction of his hollowness. By their brokenness, incoherence, and chaos, the inward departure from God would be measured and manifested. How many a man in the church and at the family-altar and in his secret retirement, would have the shame of an enforced silence, or of mutterings in an unknown tongue, or of the repetitions of his last successful investments in business, or the arithmetic of his ledger, or the revolving germ of a new speculation, or the compass of some anticipated pleasure. Instead of the words, Son of God Most High, have mercy upon us! there might have been heard in the midst of the congregation the words, Bonds and Mortgage, good security! And instead of the contrite petition, God be merciful to me a sinner! the sinful man might himself hear, even in his own retirement, the rapid, unconscious pursuit, aloud, of his soul's utter worldliness, in insensibility to sin, and forgetfulness of God and eternity. And such an enforced utterance of just what was in the soul, and of nothing else, would be a startling discovery of the man's real character, which might, in many cases, save a soul from utter perdition.

In this light, how incalculably important in a man's being are his *habits* of prayer! With what ceaseless vigilance should they be watched and formed, and the fire of faith and love never be permitted to steal away from them! As fixtures in the religious character, they should be set right at first, from the very outset. *Let every man take heed how he buildeth.* In the building up of spiritual character it is very much as it is in building houses. A man constructing his house from the foundation with a view to the best improvements, carries it up all the way with reference to them. If he is to have water in every room, he runs his grooves for the pipes accordingly, when the walls are in building. If he will have every room in the house heated by a furnace, he begins this work with the foundations, and carries it up from story to story. If

he will have a thorough ventilation, the arrangements must be made for that in like manner. If he builds a house hastily, carelessly, without any regard to these things, any eye to them, he cannot afterwards introduce them, without a labor and expense almost as great as that of the original structure without them.

Just so it is with a man's Christian character. He must make it thorough from the outset, must build it of the best materials, the best habits, in the best manner. It will save him a world of trouble in the end. It will accomplish for him a vast amount of usefulness and of happiness, which otherwise he will lose, will be unfitted for. And it will save him a vast amount of damage. For if he does not *begin* right, he will not only *lose* a great many *good* things, but he will *introduce* a great many questionable, awkward, *evil* things. If he build the gold, silver, precious stones of heavenly habits, in, upon, and for Christ, they will last, they will not have to be taken down, and built over again; they will stand the fires of temptation here, and of judgment hereafter. But if he build wood, hay, stubble, the stubble of loose, or self-indulgent, or injurious habits, the house of his piety is liable to take fire at any time; every storm will make rents in it, every temptation will break it through; it will be a poor miserable tenement while he lives in it, and he himself will be saved out of it only so as by fire, only by having all the wood, hay, and stubble burned up; a devouring conflagration, in which a man may think himself infinitely happy, if his own soul escape the burning.

A man should remember, from the beginning, that his habits of prayer are fixtures; everything depends upon them. Prayer governs everything in the following of the soul after Christ. If Faith governs and inspires prayer, prayer again directs the life of Faith. You want this *habit* of *prayer* to be such from the outset, that by and by, when your religious character is found to be quite fixed, your house builded, you shall not have occasion to wish

that you could take it all down again, in order to put in new fixtures from the foundation. You want the channels, the habitual channels, of your aspirations after God, in your times of secret intercourse with Him, to be worn so deep and blessed, that the energy, the thought, the feeling of your whole being will concentrate there, will pour on in a tide of holy rapture, when the gate is opened, that nothing can turn or stay. You want habits of positive and absolute communion with God; such habits in prayer, that the time which you do take for that set action shall be all saved, all used in prayer, all on a flame in the lamp of your existence. You want the elements which you carry to the work of intercourse with your Father in Heaven to burn brightly, not feebly. You want an energy in prayer so habitual, and so habitually springing into exercise, when you come to the hour of retirement, and go in secret to seek your God, that your whole attention of mind and intensity of life shall have employment in that hour, and shall fill it up. You want a fixedness of habit, and a habit of fixedness, in your heart upon God and celestial reality, that shall bar out wandering thoughts, or rather shall take them captive, and turn them into the fuel of the heavenly flame rising in your soul to heaven.

There is almost nothing so desirable as this. For want of this fixedness of the heart in prayer, a great many hours that *seem* to be spent in prayer, are almost wasted. For want of this habit, rightly formed, cultivated, and strengthened from the outset, it cost a great deal of time to do the work of a very little time otherwise. Let this habit be formed early in one's religious life, and let that religious life be formed early *in* life, and then, when the forming, the suggestive and germinating period of character is passed, the controlling channel of prayer in the soul will be found so deep, so broad, so fixed, that, as we said, the energies of the being will concentrate within it, and the work of hours and days of loose thought, of inattentive, wandering thought, or of indifferent feeling, shall be accomplished

in moments. A man who has this habit of solemn, holy, affectionate fixedness of the soul on God in prayer, will get nearer to Him, will gain more strength, more grace, a greater supply of faith, and every encouragement and impulse in the Divine Life (and if he be interceding for others, will do more for them) in five minutes, than a soul without this habit, a soul of wandering thoughts and low affections, in as many hours. There is no possibility of exaggerating the importance of this fixedness of the soul upon God in prayer, when you come to the set act of prayer.

And to this end, these set seasons should be frequent, and a liberal portion of time should be given to them. They should not be less in *number* than King David's; *evening*, and *morning*, and at *noon*, will I pray and cry aloud unto Thee; and they should not be less in *fervor* than his; my soul followeth hard after Thee; and they should not be less in *time*, each one of them, than to enable the soul to collect its whole energies, under the impulse of Faith and Love, to be poured out in a sweet season of communion with God and fellowship with the Redeemer. What faith this requires, what effort it takes, every man knows, who strives daily to walk closely with God; but also, every such man knows from deep and thankful experience, how blessed are the results of such faith and effort, such holy diligence, sustained by the grace of God. It is a foretaste of heaven on earth, and is worth every effort, cost what it may, thus to walk daily with God, thus daily to FOLLOW CHRIST.

Thy mansion is the Christian's heart;
O Lord, thy dwelling-place secure.
Bid the unruly throng depart,
And leave the consecrated door.

Devoted as it is to Thee,
A thievish swarm frequents the place;
They steal away my joys from me,
And rob my Saviour of his praise.

There, too, a sharp designing trade
Sin, Satan, and the world maintain;
Nor cease to press me, and persuade
To part with ease, and purchase pain.

I know them, and I hate their sin,
Am weary of the bustling crowd;
But while their voice is heard within,
I cannot serve Thee as I would.

O for the joy thy presence gives!
What peace shall reign when Thou art here!
Thy presence makes this den of thieves
A calm, delightful house of prayer.

And if Thou make thy temple shine,
Yet, self-abased, will I adore.
The gold and silver are not mine;
I give Thee what was Thine before.

COWPER.

DEVELOPMENT, DISCIPLINE, AND FRUITS OF FAITH.

PART FOURTH.

GRACE AND TRUTH.
CHRIST IN THE SOUL THE HOPE OF GLORY.

WINDINGS OF THE RIVER, CONTINUED.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Christ the Light of the Soul.—In this world, partial, as through a glass darkly. In the Celestial world, supreme, entire, unmingled, universal.—The single eye, and the Spiritual body.

We are told of a Brahman in India, whose faith makes it an article of religious duty to abstain from eating the flesh of animals, who one day met an Englishman exhibiting a microscope. The Englishman, to convince the Brahman of the absurdity of his superstition, would show him that he could not help eating the flesh of animals, even though he lived upon vegetables alone. He therefore persuaded him to look through his microscope at a piece of fruit or vegetable production, which formed part of the Brahman's daily food, when to the horror of the man he beheld whole herds of living creatures detected by the power of the instrument, and demonstrating the falsehood of his Pagan theology. He was so indignant at the sight, that he seized the microscope and trampled it under foot, breaking it in pieces, thinking perhaps that he had thus destroyed the evidence in nature against him. So the sinful heart may be tempted to think that by keeping away from the light, or shutting the light out, it may keep quiet in the persua-

sion of its own goodness and security. And so a man in the indulgence of anything that is wrong avoids the light, and would destroy the evidence. But a man whose desire is that Christ should rule supremely in his heart and life, a man whose eye is single to Christ, will be willing and desirous to have Christ's eye single upon him, and everything open to Christ's inspection and the trial of the truth. When this is the case, the whole body will be full of light; there will be very few causes or occasions of darkness.

There being this reliance of the soul on Christ, this singleness and fixedness of purpose in divine things, this breathing of the soul after him, will lead to great and persevering intensity in prayer, and the Holy Spirit will be vouchsafed, and God will shine into the heart, so that it will be full of light without any darkness. Purity and disinterestedness of motive is the first and most important thing, the very spring of light, the spiritual atmosphere, that not only surrounds, but *permeates* the being, and renders it transparent, so that the light, as it were, goes through and through it. With this singleness and fixedness of purpose and purity of motive, there will be great simplicity of mind, and an intuitive discernment of light and knowledge. The insight of the soul into divine things will be spontaneous. He that is spiritual judgeth all things, for the Spirit that dwells within him searcheth all things, even the deep things of God. His soul is as different from that of a natural man, as a palace with windows is different from a subterranean dungeon. Simple love to Christ, and fixedness of the heart on Him, make the soul transparent, for heavenly light to enter, and dwell in every part.

This, certainly, is the meaning of that text, If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. *Single*, that is, simple, undivided, sincere, and straight to its object. But what is that object? Single to what? What can it be but Christ, the source of duty and of light?

Single to Christ, and not looking askant to earth and self. Single to the Source of light. Or, if we take it in the connexion, which is an argument and command not to lay up treasure on earth but in heaven, for where your treasure is there will your heart be also, and if your heart be fixed on that treasure, that is, if your eye be single to that, then your whole body shall be full of light;—take it in this way, and the matter is just as plain as before. For what is heaven, and what is your treasure there, but Christ, and what are you to seek but Christ? Still, nothing but Christ, so that the meaning of the passage is perfectly plain, and it is not possible to hide or darken it. This singleness commanded is fixedness of the soul on God, on heaven, on Christ; a supreme regard to his will, and to your duty to him, and to those things on which he commands you to fasten your affections. This is to have the eye single; and having this, you are sure of the promise that follows, *fulness of light.*

The light promised is in reference to God, spiritual things, and our duty. The evidence of such things will be seen and felt in all its irresistible power and fulness. There shall be such light, as to overcome doubt, and produce assurance. He that will do God's will shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, shall see, recognise, and know it without mistake, in some measure as God knows it; it will appear to the soul that is born of God as it appears to God. It will be a clear transparency of truth, producing a knowledge and conviction heartfelt and unassailable in the inmost being. He that believeth hath the witness in himself; and God gives to the believer in Christ the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints. Open thou mine eyes, says David, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. God

answers this prayer, and he causes the soul to behold still more wondrous things out of the gospel. He shines into the heart with the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ. The Spirit takes of the things that are Christ's and shows them to the soul. It is light upon the attributes of God, especially as manifested in the cross and person of the Saviour; and it is light on the ways of God to man, and on every part of truth and providence disclosed in the book of revelation, and on God's government of the world, as seen in the light of revelation. Thus filling the souls of believers with truth and grace, God makes them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. It is an inheritance in light; that is one of its titles; no night there, nor darkness, nor any need of candle, nor light of the sun. God makes his people meet for that inheritance, by making them now children of the light. Ye are all the children of the light and children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light. And God accomplishes this by setting before the soul the Lord Jesus Christ, and causing it by the Spirit to behold in the glass of faith the glory of the Lord, and thus to be changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord. It is a ministration of glory.

Christ being thus the central luminary, in which the soul sees all things, and from which it draws all wisdom and knowledge, it is like the angel standing in the sun, a position, in which there are no shadows. In this position the light from Christ falls on all things. The nature of sin is seen in it, the character of mankind, the justice and certainty of the opposite awards to the righteous and the wicked, all the relations of theology towards man as well as towards God. We have an unction from the Holy One, says the Apostle, and know all things; and he that is thus spiritual, occupying this spiritual position in Christ,

judgeth all things. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all, and therefore he that in Christ dwelleth in God, dwelleth in light.

But intellectually, this light must at present be partial, even though the soul be standing in the sun. Or rather, though the light be not partial, yet the view of the soul must necessarily be so, because, in the nature of things and by reason of our limited capacities, we cannot now see all things in their true relative position. It is only morally, in the way of faith and love, that our light can be absolutely full, excluding darkness. There may be impassable gulfs in our vision, intellectually, and such gaps and breaks must be filled up with love, or bridged over by faith; and love will prevent darkness, even though the mind may be at a loss, may not be able to see. He that followeth me, says our Blessed Lord, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The promise is unfailing, but remember, it is the light of life, not of the mere dry intellect, that is promised, not of intellectual abstractions and subtleties. A man's soul may be full of this glorious light of life, though there may be many things which he cannot see. Not seeing does not necessarily involve darkness, for a man may not see many things even at noon-day, because the objects are too far off; and sometimes you cannot see, because of the very excess of light. But the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. There is a progression from one degree of light to another. There is a partial day, and there is a perfect day; the partial day is here, the perfect day in heaven; and when that which is perfect is come, then that which is partial shall be done away. But till then, we walk by faith, not by sight, and there are occasions on which the very purpose and discipline of God in teaching us and preparing us for the light, and the perfect day, require that we should be for a season, or in some things, in darkness. But even on such occasions—they may be occasions of trial in affliction, or

occasions of severe assaults from the great Tempter, or occasions of discipline from sin, in which the soul has to say with Jeremiah, He hath led me into darkness, but not light; on all such occasions, the believing soul, being resigned to God's will, and sure that he is doing what is right, and all things well, though it may be in darkness, will wait patiently in humble submission and confidence, if not in joy and peace, knowing that all things shall issue in light, though now for the present, if need be, the soul is in heaviness through manifold temptations and trials. The mere being in darkness, therefore, is no proof that you are not a child of God. Sometimes, in some respects, darkness is necessary, in order that you may see and know the things that are freely given to you of God. There are different kinds of light, and sometimes the light in which you are walking in this world may operate just merely as a veil to keep you from seeing the light of the celestial world.

Have you ever been with children to see an exhibition of transparencies in painting? Perhaps you have, frequently, and to very splendid ones, and yet may not have drawn from their arrangement the spiritual lesson, which the simplest exhibition of the kind might awaken. We were once, on such an occasion, all seated and waiting in a lighted room, when the proprietor and master of the show came, and told us that for a season he must put out *our* lights, and leave us in darkness, but that there would be light enough in the transparencies themselves, when they began to shine. And so it was indeed, for we needed no light but that which came from the other side through the transparencies, filling the whole room. And so it is with all God's dealings. Thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth, says the Psalmist. Sometimes God says to us, I must put out *your* lights, or you cannot see *mine*. But I put yours out, only in order that you *may* see mine, and never more be in darkness. I leave you in darkness for a season, but when you behold my glory, you will be

satisfied; when the transparency shines, there will be light enough. God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his Sovereign will.

But we cannot judge him by feeble sense; that is *our* light, which he must sometimes darken, in order that we may trust him for his grace, and so see him, and observe how, behind a frowning providence, he hides a smiling face. This is God's infinite, divine wisdom.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain:
God is his own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

It is manifest, therefore, that it is only faith and love which can in this world exclude darkness, and make the soul a creation of light in Christ. This is the experience of heaven begun on earth; this is the light of heaven shining on earth. If thine eye be thus single, thy whole body shall be full of light, in such fulness, that there shall be no part dark, but it shall be as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light, filling every place in thine apartment. This singleness of motive, this simple, reigning, heartfelt love, makes the soul an undivided kingdom of glory. Darkness is shut out, and there is no room for anything but light. Self-will is not in the way, for self is forgotten; not so much sacrificed, as forgotten; for, where all is given up, there is no need of sacrifice, nothing to be relinquished. Love gives up all, and regards it not as a sacrifice, even in the very act of sacrificing all; love thinks not of self, but God is all in all. God's will is the delight of the soul. God's precepts delighted in, God's law, God's pur-

poses, God's commands, sought and obeyed from love, bring liberty and light. Freedom from self is eternal liberty. To lose sight of self in God is the most perfect independence and freedom in the universe. Self being forgotten, and God reigning supremely in the soul, the soul is one with God, is a partaker of God's blessedness, God's light. The body is full of light. God's will, God's designs, God's plan, will be clearly seen and known, and the knowledge of God's will is all that such a soul needs to make it blessed; for God is love, and his will is love, to the soul that loves him. So, as we have said, even if you put such a soul in darkness, its confidence in God makes it wait in submissive joy and peace, knowing that all things shall issue in clear light.

But this clear light without any darkness, and this issue of all things into it, can only be in the future world, the world of glory. Here, we see as through a glass darkly; but there, face to face. Here, we know in part, but there, even as we are known. Here, we walk by faith, and by the communications of God's Spirit revealing to us through his Word something of the light of heaven. But all that we see here is no more than an approximation towards some conception of what is to be seen there. For in vain does the imagination strive to fill the present horizon of the soul's vision with definite forms. Beloved, says the Apostle, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. When he, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory. Then indeed, in a wonderful sense, the whole body shall be full of light, for it will be the glorified body of the resurrection of the just; it will be a body like unto Christ's glorious body, according to the working wherewith he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Now we cannot undertake to say certainly that this glorified body was in Christ's mind when he spake the

words, Thy whole body shall be full of light; but we do say that the words will then only receive all the fulfilment of which they are capable, when their meaning is seen in a body like unto Christ's glorious body; in that body, which all, whose heart and eye here are irradiated with the light and love of Christ, are yet to put on. And here we say, moreover, that one great reason of our utter incapacity to form any definite conceptions of the glories of the heavenly world, may be the want of that very medium, through which alone the heavenly world can be definitely seen and conversed with, and that is, a body which is the image of Christ's body. When clothed upon with that house which is from heaven, the soul will see and understand. It will be as familiar with the scenes of heaven as the angels are, and those scenes will be as familiar and as suited to the souls of the redeemed in Christ's image with their glorified spiritual body, as to the souls of angels. But it may be absolutely impossible, without that spiritual organization, to come into such communion with the spiritual world as all the redeemed are advancing towards, and as all the angels enjoy.

And this may be one of the mysterious reasons which induced the assumption by our Blessed Lord of a body like ours in accomplishing the work of redemption; that that body itself might be changed, glorified, and formed as a type, according to which it would be possible, and according to that alone, to be admitted amidst the glories of heaven with the possibility of understanding them. God is said to dwell in light inaccessible, and that no man hath seen nor can see him, and this impossibility of seeing God as he is, in that inaccessible light, may be taken away only by man becoming just like Christ *as he is*, being clothed in a body like unto his glorious body. And this may be one reason for the unutterable yearnings and longings expressed in the Scriptures for that transformation, for the time of putting on that body. Then only will there be a full introduction to the glories of the celestial world; but then will the

whole body be full of light, such and so glorious that till then there can be no adequate conception of it. In the expectation of such light the saints are willing to see for the present as through a glass darkly.

A glance from heaven, with sweet effect,
  Sometimes my pensive spirit cheers,
But ere I can my thoughts collect,
  As suddenly it disappears.
So lightning, in the gloom of night,
  Affords a momentary day,
Disclosing objects full in sight,
  Which, soon as seen, are snatched away.

But shall I murmur at relief?
  Though short, it was a precious view,
Sent to control my unbelief,
  And prove that what I read was true.
The lightning's flash did not create
  The opening prospect it revealed,
But only showed the real state
  Of what the darkness had concealed.

Just so we by a glimpse discern
  The glorious things within the veil,
That when in darkness we may learn
  To live by Faith, till light prevail.
The Lord's great day will soon advance,
  Dispersing all the shades of night;
Then we no more shall need a glance,
  But see by an eternal light.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Vision of Faith continued.—Spiritual discernment only from God.—The natural man and the Spiritual man, the blind man and the seeing.

NOTHING can be more emphatic, precise, and unmistakable than the manner in which the Scriptures speak of the natural blindness of men's hearts, until they are brought under the influence of the grace of God. Then, and not till then, they begin to see with the vision of faith; then, and not till then, can they be said to see. "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." The first step to a man's spiritual eyesight is this conviction of his blindness; then he sits by the way-side, when Christ is passing by, and cries, Lord, that I might receive my sight! The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. But when the natural man, in this non-receptive blindness, is brought to the Great Physician, and the operation of couching takes place, then he begins to see; and as the cure comes to its perfection, then the two states exhibited in that passage in the Epistle to the Corinthians are manifested in their contrast. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, but he that is spiritual judgeth, or discerneth, all things.

The discernment here spoken of is the teaching of the Spirit of God. The blindness spoken of came not from God but from man, and is the work of Satan in man. But the clear-sightedness here spoken of is from God, not

man or Satan. Satan's kingdom is that of darkness, and if a man gives himself up to it, he is marching to the blackness of darkness for ever. God's kingdom is that of light, and if a man by Christ's invitation will come into it, he shall be prepared, and at length received, into that world of glory, where they have no need either of the sun or the moon to enlighten it, for the Lord God and the Lamb are the light and the temple of it.

The teaching of God's Spirit is in the heart. God begins there, and works upon the affections. The Divine Spirit does not come with a great array of sciences, chemical lectures, mathematical demonstrations, Aristotelian subtleties, or interminable absolutisms of German metaphysics, or systems either of logic, or theology, or materialism, cut and dried as classified anatomies in a museum. Nothing of all this, which by its very presentation flatters the pride of intellect in man. Except ye become as little children, not as wise philosophers, there is no teaching for you here. And ye must *come* as little children, or ye will never *become* either children or wise men in the school of Christ; for the very first lesson of the Great Teacher is—what? Rhetoric? Logic? Miracles? Churches? Baptisms? Sciences? No! nothing of all this, but just simply, meekness and lowliness of heart; and then a man does indeed get into the very heart and soul of knowledge, while all others are but just walking blindfold over the outside crust. Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and that is the first lesson. So God begins with the heart. The teaching of his Spirit prepares the heart to see, and then the mind is taught to see, through the heart. God hath shined in our *hearts*. He must begin there, because there, and not in the mind, is the seat of darkness and evil. In all moral things the mind is within the heart, not the heart within the mind; in all moral things the heart is the window of the mind, not the mind the window of the heart. The veil of the god of this world is over the heart first; he could never get it

over the mind otherwise. The mental philosophy of the Bible is just this, in the fourth chapter of Ephesians; Vanity of mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Therefore the Great Physician of the soul, whose Omniscience discerns not the mere *symptoms*, but the *seat* of the disease, goes directly to the heart.

There the teaching of God's Spirit produces this spiritual discernment, which is sharpened and increased just in proportion as a right state of the affections is produced and made permanent. A right state of the affections towards God is the whole secret of light and knowledge. If thine eye be single, thy whole body, thy whole being, mortal and immortal, shall be full of light. This right state of the affections in spiritual things is analogous to a clear state of the atmosphere in material things, for the affections may be called the atmosphere of the soul. There is as great a difference of times and states in the one case as in the other. Sometimes, walking on the seashore, you can see far out over it. Again it is dim and hazy, and you can see nothing. Just so in spiritual things. Sometimes in sailing over the ocean you can see as far as the very roundness of the globe will suffer you; you can see the tops of the masts, when the hull is hidden by the globe's convexity. Just so you can sometimes see the colors, the pennants, the top-gallant sails of Divine Truths, when the hull is hidden from you by the very constitution of your being, as a creature of this world, and of a perishable body.

Sometimes even in sailing by night, under a cloudless sky, although there be no moon, the air is so serenely clear, and the stars are so glittering, that no signals are needed; you are in no danger of striking a ship in your course, or a reef before you. But again the air shall be so thick, so foggy, that even by day you can see nothing before you, but must sail, if at all, by the lead and line,

and by ringing the alarm bell, that the sound may tell, where the sight fails.

Now we suppose there is quite as great a difference produced, by the state of the affections, in the atmosphere of the soul. When the heart is right with God, humble, submissive, believing, the things of eternity rise up with a divine clearness. Where there is no selfishness in the way, O with what beauty and glory do all God's dispensations and revelations of himself appear! How clearly are truths seen, and how powerfully apprehended and felt, which at other times, and in a different state of the affections, are scarcely distinguished or realized at all! The simplest truths sometimes come out as in a new revelation. You wonder where you have been, or what you have been doing all this while, that you had not seen them in this light before. They are as windows in heaven. You seem in such a case as if carried past the stars into heaven's pure ether, or as if sailing gloriously amidst Paradisaical islands, where every object is full of radiance and beauty. New worlds upon worlds seem opening before you.

But at other times, let the heart be wrong, let it be earthly, self-seeking, distrustful of God, anxious, prayerless, and nothing of all this glory can be seen. You may be carried past the same stars in the same position, but you shall not see them; you may sail amidst the same islands, but the air is so thick, that you shall strike the rocks before you are aware of them. And sometimes in the voyages of your soul you shall feel that you can only go by anxious soundings, the compass itself seeming useless, not knowing your bearings, hearing here and there, perhaps, the dim tolling bell amidst the thick darkness, warning you to keep off. Or you may neither hear nor see anything by which you can fix your position, and you may be tossed like Paul in his vessel up and down in Adria, wishing for the day, happy if meanwhile your anchors will hold you, till you can see what to do.

But he that is spiritual discerneth all things. As many

as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God. We must let God's sacred Word make its own definitions, for the Holy Ghost thus teacheth, by comparing spiritual things with spiritual. This being led by the Spirit of God is the secret of all true spiritual discernment. The Spirit takes of the things that are Christ's, and shows them to the soul; that, in fact, belongs to the office of the Holy Ghost the Comforter. The Spirit leads the soul into all truth, according to Christ's promise. He that is thus taught, led, enlightened, is spiritual, and discerns all things by the guidance of the Spirit. He understands by a spiritual experience, things otherwise a blank mystery to him. The soul never realizes the spiritual world without this, nor becomes sensible either of its forms or infinite interests and responsibilities of being. The very existence of God is a thing not realized without this.

> But if thy Spirit touch the soul,
> And grace her mean abode,
> Oh! with what peace and joy and love
> She then communes with God.

Truly the soul itself is as a dungeon without this. A man must have this spiritual discernment, or the world itself is as a prison and a sepulchre to him. A man might as well be laid in the grave. For what is the difference between a space as big as a coffin, and a space as large as our globe, if a man be without God, without spiritual discernment. Such a man's soul is really in a clay coffin, though the walls of the universe be the lids of his sepulchre.

Now the *degree* of spiritual discernment possessed by a being taught of the Spirit of God depends much upon the habits of the soul, the study of spiritual things, the degree of watchfulness against sin, the faithfulness of the soul in prayer, the time one has been conversant with divine realities, and the habit of living with reference to them.

A long practised eye is keen-sighted. A prayerful, spiritual Christian, drawing near the close of this mortal career, sometimes seems to walk in open vision of unseen glories. Hence Bunyan's most delightful and yet truthful picture of the Land Beulah. Hence the radiant vision of a soul like Baxter, and his familiarity with the things of the Saints' Rest. Hence the ravishing clearness with which a soul like Edwards' sees the truths of the gospel, the attributes of God, the glory of the Cross, the divine majesty of the Saviour. And hence, too, the surprising acquaintance of such souls with the mysteries of Revelation. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant. An unction from the Holy One rests upon them, and they know all things. Hence their discernment of the human heart, and their knowledge both of the natural and the spiritual man. The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God; the things of the natural man every man knows. And the spiritual man, having once been the natural man, knows his old state perfectly, and that of every other man by it; because, as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man answers to man. And by the light and teachings of the Holy Spirit he now, as the spiritual man, knows the deep workings of human depravity much more thoroughly than he ever did as a natural man. He looks back over the path he was so long pursuing, and over which thousands upon thousands are now crowding, and he sees where each soul is wandering in the congregation of the dead. He himself having been brought out into the light, looks back through the region of darkness, but they that are in the darkness cannot see, through that, into the region of light. He judges the natural man, but the natural man cannot judge him, except only by seeing in his life the fruits of the Spirit. But the hidden life of the regenerated soul, the life hidden with Christ in God, is discerned of no man. The things of God must be seen by

the Spirit of God, by an experience produced by his Spirit in the soul.

Now is there anything strange in this? Is this a hard saying, that a man needs to be taught of God; that sin makes him blind, until God makes him to see; and that all the true piety he ever had or ever will have, comes from God only? Is it a hard saying, that man, being fallen and lost, cannot save himself, but God must save him? Why, truly, we think it is a very blessed saying. It is great joy and glory to feel that in our religion, at least, we have got one element, that is no part of it from man, but all of God. Men may take their full swing, if they please, in self-glorification about their republicanism, and hospitals, and gold mines, and steam-engines, and railroads, and magnetic telegraphs; but let them stop this side heaven; let them confess that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. No, he must be taught of God, he must have this spiritual discernment wrought in him. Where is boasting then? Thank God, it is excluded; yea, there is one thing out of which our pride is excluded utterly, and no room left for it, because it is not of man, but only of God.

This is a great triumph of our Redeemer's grace over the temptations of Satan, so that he cannot tempt us with his leering flatteries and lies about our godlike human nature, a thing which we know we have trampled in the mire of sin, and from which we have obliterated the divine image. It is an infinite proof of the *reality* of this religion of the Cross as God's religion, that it is God's *wholly*, not man's; that it is not the bolstering up of rotten posts in man's ruined nature, banking them up so as to conceal them, nor the nursing and cosseting and cultivating of his religious and godlike tendencies in the midst of his sins; but a new creation, a new birth and growth, a new gar-

ment, and not the patch-work of an old one. It is not man cultivated up to God, but it is God coming down to man, and making him a partaker of the divine nature through the knowledge of Christ; so that, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are done away, behold all things are become new, and all things are of God. Any man, no matter who. He may have thought himself ever so amiable, so virtuous, so free from evil, so godlike;—if he be in Christ he is a new creature; there is nothing of the old man that can stand; and if he be not in Christ, he is not a new creature; it is merely the same old natural man that receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, so that whatever be the virtues of that natural man, yet if he trusts in them, they are all but the traps of Satan to keep him away from Christ. Virtues trusted in may do that as well, and sometimes better, than crimes. They are false weights put into a man's scales, by which, though he may be priding himself on his never having injured or cheated his fellow man, yet he cheats both himself and God, or rather attempts to do this, for God cannot be deceived. But a man with Satan's help may very easily deceive himself; nay, he needs *no* help to do this; and if such self-deception keeps him away from Christ, it will be his everlasting ruin. He must be a new creature if he would be saved; he never will be, but in Christ.

Now therefore, we see very clearly the infinite importance and blessedness of this spiritual discernment presented as characteristic only of the spiritual man, and the only way of gaining it. It is most certainly the gift of God's Spirit and that alone, and it must be sought with great earnestness from God. It is in connexion with the promise of this gift, that our Blessed Lord has insisted upon this importunity. The heart that would neither be blinded of self and Satan, nor left to insensibility, nor to the delusions of peace when there is no peace, must come to Jesus Christ for instruction and healing, must come to God in prayer through him, must come to God's Word,

begging for the light and sanctifying grace of God's Spirit. And the mind must be careful not to come to the Word of God under a cloud of prejudice, or in the mist of notions preconceived in a state of blindness and insensibility to spiritual truth. A man must remember how vast and fatal may be the effect of a mistake either in regard to his own character or God's character. He must come with the prayer, God be merciful to me a sinner, and not, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men. He must come with humble views of ruined human natnre, or his whole theology and religion will be a system of mistake and ruin. Let it be remembered that Newton himself was seventeen years calculating in vain in regard to the heavenly bodies, because of a slight mistake as to the measurement of the earth's circumference. Just so in theology, a man may fail of learning the whole system, by a misconception as to his own character and place in it. He must take some accurate measurement of self before he can learn God, and must come to God to learn the truth in regard to self. God's Word will teach him his own ruin, and the remedy for it, and Christ will anoint his eyes with eye-salve that he may see.

And then the *habit* of looking at spiritual things is of vast importance. A man's spiritual sight is greatly strengthened by use. The inward eye must be purged from films, and able to gaze fixedly and steadily, so as to detect error and discern the truth. If you have ever been at sea, you have noted how quickly, and almost miraculously, an accustomed seaman will discern a far-off sail in the horizon. It seems to a landsman like a supernatural faculty, and such a man will gaze and gaze again in the very direction pointed out to him, and yet can see nothing of the reported sail. And often he cannot find it, even though he looks through the telescope, when your practised seaman with his sharp sight can see it with the naked eye. It is because the landsman has been accustomed to look at objects only near at hand, and to look at more distant objects

through the comparatively dense and mixed atmosphere that rests upon the earth. And just so, a spiritual mind, accustomed to gaze over the ocean of Eternity, habituated to a vast horizon, catches the truth afar off, can tell you its bearings, can discern, as it were, what nation it is of, even before an earthly mind can see it at all.

So a spiritual mind, with its piercing and practised vision, can sometimes see a whole fleet of white sails crossing the bright horizon of Eternal truth, when your earthly mind will come up out of its cabin, and gaze in every direction without seeing anything, declaring perhaps that there is not a solitary sail visible. Give him the telescope, the Word of God ; show him the text, with the truth breaking through it, as glory through a cleft in heaven ; and yet he cannot see. He wonders how you can see, and sets it down as vain enthusiasm. Just so a landsman at sea cannot discern the land, when the man at the mast-head, yea and all the crew, can see it afar off. So a mind accustomed to earthly things, and to looking through an earthly medium, cannot see divine truth as the eye of faith can see it. Just so in the voyage of life, a mind that is taught of God, and accustomed to the things of his Word, a prayerful mind, and a humble, believing heart, sees a thousand signs and realities, which a careless, unbelieving man never notices. A spiritual voyager sees hidden rocks, and shoals, and dangers, which a man neglectful of God and eternity does not see, but makes his course directly over them. He may escape them for a season, but by and by he will make shipwreck of his soul.

Now amidst all these dangers, and all the temptations of the world, the multitudinous maze of evil examples, and the desperate blindness and insensibility of sin, what an infinite mercy that if we will, we may be taught of God. Taught of God ! How simple, how beautiful, how glorious the expression ! Yea, there is heaven itself in that expression, and a man taught of God cannot miss heaven. A man taught of God will know every part of religious

experience, know it by heart. A man taught of God will know the way of prayer by experience, the life of faith by experience, the unsearchable riches of Christ by experience. But this spiritual discernment must be begun on earth, or it will never be found in heaven.

Let a man take care of putting presumption in place of discernment. What Bunyan quaintly says of *pinnacle-men* is full of instruction. "You have some men cannot be content to worship in the temple, but must be aloft; no place will serve them but pinnacles, pinnacles; that they may be speaking in and to the air, that they may be promoting their heady notions instead of solid truth; not considering that now they are where the devil would have them be. They strut upon their points, their pinnacles; but let them look to it, there is difficult standing upon pinnacles; their neck, their soul is in danger. We read, God is in his temple, not upon these pinnacles."

Easy indeed it were to reach
A mansion in the courts above,
If swelling words and fluent speech
Might serve instead of faith and love.
But none shall gain the blissful place,
Or God's unclouded glory see,
Who talks of free and sovereign grace,
Unless that grace has made him free.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Faith's Vision continued.—Spiritual discernment and Spiritual insensibility both illustrated by the Transfiguration.

On this subject of spiritual discernment, or the vision of Faith, a world of sacred meaning is opened to us in the simple account of the Transfiguration. As we have endeavored to trace the early process of Faith in the lives of those disciples, whom our Blessed Lord took with him into the Mount, we will now, through the window of a great phrase in the inspired description, look upon a material point in the growth and increase of faith, or the discipline requisite for its clear-sightedness.

It is said that *when they were awake, they saw His glory*. It was glory that had been burning on the Mount all night long, while they were sleeping and saw it not. It was a glory that brought Heaven and earth, God and man together, the glory of God manifest in the flesh, and of redeemed humanity in the image of God, clothed upon in the likeness of the Saviour. But when it began, and long after it continued, the disciples were heavy with sleep, and saw nothing of it. They were in the midst of it, and yet saw it not. But it went on, as the orbs of heaven went on in their courses, while they slumbered; and when they were awake, and not till then, they saw it.

The circumstances of the case account, in some measure, for the heaviness of the disciples with sleep, although, had they been as deeply interested in their Redeemer and

his spiritual kingdom as they afterwards were, they would have watched with Christ, and seen the coming on of this great glory. But they had been travelling perhaps all the day, and ascending the mountains with some fatigue to the point where this amazing revelation was to take place. This was an instructive circumstance in itself, for our bright visions of heaven are not to be gained without climbing, and often cost much labor, time, and patience, to come at them, much earnest, persevering prayer and discipline of the soul. But when you have climbed the mountain, when the heights are once gained, though it may have cost days and weeks of wearisome travel, the glory of the view is more than a compensation for all the fatigue. And let it be remembered that the spiritual fatigue, instead of oppressing the eye of the soul with slumber, opens it, and renders it clear and watchful, far-seeing and strong. It is a discipline the very nature of which tends to put the soul in such a state, that the glory of the prospect may be clearly discerned, and enjoyed to the uttermost. Even while the soul is climbing, and before it reaches the point where there is the greatest sweep of vision, it catches many sights of glory, many ravishing prospects by the way; and the higher it rises, the more extensive and glorious they become. The mountain scenery of the spiritual life and experience is full of glory.

It was the Delectable Mountains, whither the Shepherds carried the two Pilgrims, Christian and Hopeful, to behold afar off a glimpse of their inheritance in glory. But it was not without fatigue and long climbing that they arrived at those summits. And every new instructive scene that they beheld there, they had a mount to climb to get at it. So it always is in Christian experience. Great enjoyment, and large views, and vast rich prospects of heaven and earth are not to be gained without much and often wearisome effort; but when they are gained they infinitely more than recompense the soul for all the fatigue it has encountered.

We may mention here that at the bottom of these Delectable Mountains there was a country called Conceit, the way into which was connected, by a very crooked lane indeed, but still at a short cut, with the way of the Pilgrims coming down from their great visions of instruction and glory in the mountains. It were very easy to turn into that lane, and enter the country of Conceit, even direct from the glory of all those revelations. Now we do not know that Bunyan had here in his eye the Mount of Transfiguration, and the conduct of the disciples afterwards; but certain it is, if we read on a few verses in the chapter in Luke which records the scene on that Mount and the glory witnessed by the disciples, we find them reasoning among themselves which of them should be the greatest. Ah, here they had got into this country of Conceit, however crooked the lane might have been that led to it from the bottom of the Mountain. And perhaps the very enjoyments they had been refreshed with on the Mount, the very sights of glory they had there seen, did, by the artifice of Satan, operate to awaken in their hearts a mixture of spiritual and worldly pride, which was itself the crooked lane by which they wandered away from the Saviour. Coming down from the Mountain, whenever we have been so favored as to be at the top of it, we need beware of the country of Conceit.

Bunyan has also placed, a little beyond these Delectable Mountains, the country of the flatterer, the way which put itself into the Way of the Pilgrims, and seemed withal to lie as straight as the way which they would go, and there the Flatterer met them, a man with black flesh, but covered with a very light robe. And while they stood thinking about the way, this black but bright-covered man asked them why they were stopping there? They answered that they were going to the Celestial City, but knew not which of these ways to take. Follow me, said the man, for it is thither that I am going. So they followed him in the way that but now came into the road,

which by degrees turned, and turned them so *from* the City that they desired to go to, that in a little time their faces were turned away from it:—yet they followed him. But by and by, before they were aware, he led them both within the compass of a net, in which they were both so entangled, that they knew not what to do; and with that the white robe fell off the black man's back:—then they saw where they were.

Now the Shepherds upon the Delectable Mountains had, the very day before, given these Pilgrims a note of the way, amidst all their instructions and sights of glory on the Mountain, and had bidden them beware of this very Flatterer, for that he would meet them, when they went down from the mountains. And when the Shining One met them to rend the net and deliver them, and afterwards chastised them, he asked them where they were the night preceding. And they told him with the Shepherds upon the Delectable Mountains. And he asked them if they had not been told to beware of the Flatterer. They answered yes; but we did not imagine, said they, that this fine-spoken man had been he.

There is a volume of instruction here. Perhaps the talk of this Flatterer with the Pilgrims was concerning the very sights they had seen upon the Mountains, and he was persuading them that the Pilgrims that had seen such sights were very near perfection, they could not sin, they were holy and without sin, and such spiritual exercises could have no mixture of sin in them. He talked much of the perfection of such frames, and persuaded them of their own attainment of perfection in them; and so he went on in this fine-spoken way, till he had led them clean about, right contrary to the way to the Celestial City, whither they had been travelling. Then by the mercy of God his robe was made to fall from him, and they were made to see the dreadful delusion they had been in; or otherwise he would have gone on with them, till he had plunged them into the deep of soul-destroying sin and

error. There are false Apostles, that transform themselves into angels of light, and he that flattereth his neighbor, spreadeth a net for his feet. This black, but bright-covered Flatterer took the Pilgrims just as they had been much favored in their spiritual life, just as they had come down from the mountains; and Satan is always in wait thus to ensnare us, and turn our very enjoyments and privileges into temptations to our ruin.

It was thus that he ensnared the disciples when they came down from the Mount. Our Blessed Lord gave them as it were, a note of the way, and bade them beware of the Flatterer, and told them of his and their sufferings; but they understood him not, and began to be filled with pride, reasoning who should be the greatest, and with *spiritual* pride, undertaking to forbid those whom they found casting out devils in the name of Christ, because they would not or did not follow with them, and undertaking also to call down fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritans, because they would not receive Christ into their city. Here was pride, bigotry, and intolerance all following close upon the great revelation of glory they had had in the Mount. Here was the Flatterer in their own hearts, entangling them in his net, and he would have destroyed them, had it not been for the merciful chastising and sanctifying hand of their great Deliverer.

Their experience on the Mount, and their experience afterwards, are equally instructive. It was night when they ascended the mountain, and arrived at the place of Transfiguration. There our Blessed Lord engaged in prayer, the work for which he had chosen that spot and ascended to it. He had taken Peter and James and John, and went up into a mountain to pray. As he prayed, the disciples grew heavy with sleep. Christ wrestled in prayer, but they, instead of watching with him, yielded themselves up to slumber. And still Christ prayed, and still the disciples slept. They slept perhaps through the greater part of the interview and conversation with Moses

and Elias. They saw not the coming on of that glory, they heard not the mysteries of those hours of such discourse among the inhabitants of heaven. And had they continued to slumber, they had lost the whole of the amazing vision. But our Blessed Lord would not leave them to such a loss; the sight was especially intended for them also, as the conversation had been especially for himself and his own purposes of glory; and so his divine gracious providence ordered that the heaviness of their slumber should depart from them; and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. They awaked, and found themselves, as it were, in heaven; the light of heaven shining around them, the inhabitants of heaven standing with them, and the glory of their Divine Redeemer revealed as in the Celestial World.

Now there is in all this so much instruction both as to what we may lose by spiritual slumbers, and as to what we may gain by spiritual watchfulness, that we might almost conceive the scene to have been arranged, and the conduct of the disciples to have been permitted, as an emblem or prediction of the experience of the Church of Christ; a warning against spiritual indolence, and an encouragement to watching unto prayer. The situation of these disciples, sleeping amidst so much glory, and unconscious while such wonderful transactions were taking place around them, is but an emblem of our ordinary insensibility to the glory of the Saviour and the realities of the invisible world. We are in the midst of a universe of wonders all around us, almost materially touching upon us, crowding towards us, as it were, for our notice; but the eye of the soul may be closed, and they may be all unheeded, and we as unconscious of them as if they existed not. The Transfiguration of Christ may be going on, and Moses and Elias appearing in glory and talking with him, and we may know it not, though the scene be taking place where we are reclining in our slumbers. There may be, and there are, spiritual truths revealed in

the Lord's Supper, and transactions here taking place, the glory of which is like a Transfiguration, and in reality not inferior to it, but which our insensible soul no more sees or feels, than a blind man sees the glory of the sun when shining at noon-day. And all around us, continually, there are truths of such transcendent importance and glory radiating upon us, that if we kept a wakeful eye upon them, we could be sensible to the importance of nothing else; we should find ourselves, like Peter, James, and John, in the midst of a Mount of Transfiguration, the glory of which, until we became accustomed to it, would almost deprive us of the calm use of our senses, and make us act as if bewildered with excess of light. Our insensibility to these realities does not prevent their existence, though it loses for us their power over us, cuts them off from us, and forms, as it were, a vacuum between our souls, and the things that surround us, but touch us not.

The influence of this insensibility is beyond description disastrous, for it is only by the touch, the sense, the sight, the feeling of these realities, that we have any power over the world of sense around us, only by the sight and sense of these things that we are kept from the dream of atheism and the sleep of death; only thus that we can be quickened with impulses that impel us towards heaven and God, that make us fervent in prayer, or active in effort. If we lose sight of these great things that are taking place around us, we sink to the level of the brutes, and lose our souls. We vegetate merely, a life of flesh, heightened and dignified somewhat by intelligence, but still an earthly, degraded, miserable life of sense, and if a life of the mind at all, only of the carnal mind, which is enmity against God. This is the condition of the whole world in their insensibility to God and divine things.

Now in the midst of this insensibility, God has taken out of the world a church, and carried its members up into a Mount of Transfiguration, and there unsealed their eyes from slumber, and poured upon them the glories of the

unseen world, and the light of the presence of the Saviour. He has done this, that from that Mount of Transfiguration by divine truth, of the realization of heavenly things, they may go down again into the world thus awakened and filled with celestial activity and power, to rouse up its slumbering inhabitants, and carry them up also into the Mount to behold the Saviour. The activity and power of the Church depend upon her wakefulness in the Mount, the strength of her faith, the manner in which she beholds and lives upon the glories that surround her. But Christians, in the Church and on the Mount, may be slumbering, and may slumber through whole scenes of the manifestation of the Saviour's glory; and in such a case they lose the enjoyment and the efficacy of Christian experience, they are cut off from the sources of power and comfort in the divine life. Though upon the Mount, they see no more nor better than the world below them, and have lost the electric impulses they should have gained to carry with them to rouse up the people of a world dead in trespasses and sins. To see Christ's glory, to feel the power of it, to have a sense of his preciousness, and to carry it with them, to have heaven opened, and the promises realized, to see and feel the air of heaven around them, and its inhabitants, and its blissful pursuits, and the crown of glory, and themselves advancing to it, they must be awake and watchful; they must be praying with Christ, not yielding to indolence, if they would behold the fashion of his countenance, and his raiment white as snow, and the beings in glory talking with him. When that is the case, then they have power; then all Christian privileges, the Word of God, the Sabbath, the place of social prayer, the blessed ordinance of the Lord's Supper, are as mounts of prospect to the soul; the things of heaven are realized, the soul mounts up on the wings of faith and love, there is not only a beholding of Christ in his transfiguration, but a transfiguration of the soul itself, a change into the same image, an investiture of it with power and glory, and an

energizing of it with the influence of the unseen world, that carries it through this world, shooting an awakening impulse upon the souls of men in every direction.

Thus the admission to these scenes of transfiguration is an arrangement at once of mercy to Christ's disciples, to their own souls, for their own strength, comfort, and sanctification, and, not only so, but of mercy and salvation to others through them, and of the increase of their usefulness. As the Spirit of God takes of the things which are Christ's and imparts them to the soul, so the disciples of Christ take the things thus imparted, the truth in the reality, the experience, the power, and glory of it, and communicate it to the world, pour it upon the minds of men, act upon them with it, to awaken them and bring them to repentance. Hence the unspeakable importance of a clear view and vivid sense of divine things in the hearts of Christians. For the sake of others, for the sake of a dying world, they need to keep the flame of piety brightly burning. They should labor after a deep experience in the things of God, in order that they may have power over others. For the truth coming from a soul that speaks from experience, is entirely a different thing from even the same truth borrowed from the experience of others, and uttered only at second-hand. It has a thrilling, awakening, decisive power, when poured fresh from one soul upon another, from a soul where the Spirit of God abides, upon a soul dead in trespasses and sins. It has the life-giving power of God's own Word, when it comes from a soul whose life is hid with Christ in God.

Now all the privileges of Christ's people, all the sacred visions of the divine glory in him, to which they are admitted, all the precious ordinances of his gospel, all the mounts of grace and spiritual revelation up which they are carried with it in prayer, are intended to give power to his Word in and through them, to deepen their experience of its reality and omnipotence, to baptize them in its fire, and to prepare them to apply the same fire to the

souls of their fellow men. This was one great object of our Blessed Lord in causing Peter, James, and John to behold his glory in the Mount. This was one great reason why Paul was caught up into the third heaven. This is one heavenly purpose of the Lord's Supper. It is an ordinance of comfort, of enjoyment, of sanctification to his saints, but not for their personal benefit merely. It is that they may be strengthened for their duties to others; that they may here go up into the Mount, and behold such a view of Christ's glory, that when they go down into the world, they may go fired with the sight, lifted up above the world by it, and by communion with Christ, and with the blessed society of Moses and Elias in such communion, and prepared to walk faithfully in its remembrance many days of their pilgrimage. For this heavenly result they must be awake; they must watch beforehand, and watch and pray while on the Mount, and supplicate the precious Redeemer, who has brought them hither, to hold their eyes waking, to pour upon them his Spirit, to quicken their faith, and to instruct them anew in the mysteries and powers of Redemption. And while the talk here upon the Mount is concerning the sufferings and death of Christ, concerning his decease which he must accomplish at Jerusalem, the prayer of the soul must be that the same love that bore on our Saviour to those sufferings, may baptize and fill our souls, that we may be ready, with something of the same Spirit, to engage in labor, and bear, if need be, suffering and trial for Christ.

CHAPTER XXX.

Faith's Vision continued.—Faith passing into Love.—Self put out by letting Christ in.—Object of the appeals to Self in the Gospel.

SUFFERING for Christ, self-denial for Christ, duty done for Christ, all these things suppose Christ in the soul the hope of glory, and can come from nothing else. The spiritual sight and the spiritual life of faith, the eye single, and the daily simple following of Christ, are the result only of Christ reigning in the soul; self, and all things connected with it, being given up to Him. A mighty work, a mighty victory, a mighty principle is this, yea, a work of Omnipotent Grace, Omniscient Wisdom, and Infinite Love.

Here we must look again to our foundations, putting up the prayer of David, Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Here there is imminent danger of self-deception; here many souls make shipwreck, having self in the soul instead of Christ, the hope of glory.

For it is manifest that a man may, without confiding in Christ, and yielding up all to him, be very anxious about his eternal interests, and very much intent upon securing heaven. He may be merely a self-seeker for the world to come as well as this world; he may have self entirely, and nothing but self, in view, for that world as well as this. Believing in all the doctrines of the gospel, all the truths of religion, and perhaps especially affected by those which

relate to a future judgment and endless retribution, he may encompass all these truths and anxieties with self alone,—the idea of self, the atmosphere of self, regard to self. Believing in the dread attributes, the majesty, the holiness, the glory of God, his only regard to God may be a supremely selfish regard to his own eternal happiness. This is a wide sweep for self to take; and the great majority of mankind undoubtedly limit their selfishness to the things of this life, because they care nothing about anything else, are insensible to all eternal realities, and have neither the desire, nor ever make the attempt, to secure the favor of God.

Now there is no doubt that a certain regard to self is proper, being a constitutional and inevitable part of our existence as created beings. If, for example, to love our neighbor as ourselves be duty, then to love ourselves as our neighbor is equally duty. But a supreme regard to self is an infinite perversion and depravity. It is indeed the very fountain and essence of depravity. If a man's regard to self is entirely subservient to God, and to God's will, he is holy. But if it be supreme, then he sets up self in place of God, superior to God, and would have God exist and govern only as a servant to self, only as a means of happiness. On this foundation there is in the world a self-seeking religion, as well as a self-forgetting and self-renouncing one. And though the very idea of religion contained in the word itself, is that of being bound to God, yet there are religions which only bind God to self.

But God cannot be bound to self in our religious interests, any more than in our worldly interests. The declaration of Christ in regard to the selfishness of our nature, that he that seeketh his life shall lose it, applies more profoundly and absolutely in religion than anywhere else. He who will keep his life in his own hands, and not trust it to Christ, he who will make his own happiness his supreme end, and will not trust that happiness to Christ, nor make Christ's will his happiness, and duty to God his

aim, he, seeking only to save his life, shall lose it. He who has no aim in religion higher than self, shall lose self.

But you will say, Are not the hope of heaven and the fear of hell appealed to continually in the Word of God, and does not the Apostle say, that knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade men, and is it not incontrovertible that God himself commands us to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on the hope set before us, and to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure? And does he not tell us with encouragement, to abound in all the Christian graces and virtues, for that so doing an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of the Lord? No doubt he does. All this is perfectly plain, and it is every man's unquestionable duty to desire and seek his salvation above all things. But he is to seek it in Christ, and when there is no love of God in the soul, it is manifest that the hope of heaven and the fear of hell are merely selfish. They may be the beginning of good, the first impulse *towards* holiness, but they are not, and cannot be, holiness in themselves. If the hope of heaven and the fear of hell constituted holiness, then all mankind would be holy, even in their sins. But the hope of heaven and the fear of hell are the motives in man's ruined nature, which God in mercy lays hold upon by his Holy Spirit to raise the soul to holiness and life in Christ. A man awakened by the Spirit of God, and made sensible of eternal realities and of his own guilt, fears hell and desires heaven, and this impulse makes him flee to Christ to be saved from hell and prepared for heaven. This is the true representation, in which the great master of the human heart, as sanctified by grace, has presented his Christian, awakened at first in the City of Destruction, and flying from the wrath to come. But he is no Christian, till he is in Christ.

Now this desire of heaven and fear of hell, stopping short of Christ, or setting the soul in any other direction than that towards Christ, may produce a merely selfish

religion, instead of a religion of gratitude and love. If the soul set out to save itself, instead of casting all on Christ, if it labor after a garment of morality or of good feelings, in which to be accepted of Christ, it is endeavoring to make a selfish purchase of heaven, instead of being willing to owe everything, as a guilty, worthless, dying sinner, to the free, unbought mercy of the Saviour. If, as Bunyan describes this delusion, the soul takes up with the advice of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and applies for teaching and relief to the ministry of Legality, in the town of Carnal Policy, it will remain in its native selfishness and corruption, whatever it may think it has experienced of the power, or manifested of the fruits, of true piety. And in truth the fruits of a self-seeking religion may be very like those of a self-forgetting religion. If a man be under a system where penance, and tithes, and alms-giving, and fasting, and self-mortification, and will-worship are enjoined as the sure purchase of heaven, and the conscience under condemnation of God's law is stirred up in anguish and fear, then the desire for safety and peace of conscience may work miracles of morality and of self-denial, miracles of poverty, self-chosen, miracles of alms-giving and the washing of the feet of the poor, all to gain the security of heaven.

But this is the sinful, selfish man, seeking his life to lose it. This is self-justification, the attempt to create merit out of nothing but sin. It is building on false capital, a spiritual speculation, which is a greater and infinitely more disastrous bubble than the South Sea scheme. It is the circulation of bad money, of forged notes. It is counterfeit piety. It may have cost an immense deal to produce it, as indeed all good counterfeits are costly, but notwithstanding this, it is all condemned. We have dwelt upon this before, but it deserves looking at again in the present connexion. Men who see not as God seeth may wonder that it should be condemned. Looking, for example, on such self-denying scrupulosity and painful holiness and

self-mortification as that of Luther in his cell, while he was yet a stranger to Christ and true piety, men may think it strange and hard that such incessant agonizing efforts should not prevail, that such unexampled strictness of morality, and fastings and prayers and external goodness, should not be accepted. But with all its cost, it is worthless, counterfeit, condemned. There might be an establishment for coining base money which should cost incalculably more than all the arrangements for the pursuit of any honest branch of trade on the largest scale, but neither the costliness of the establishment, nor the perfection with which its processes were executed, could prevent the condemnation of the coin. And just so, though this morality and religion of penance and voluntary humility and will-worship costs an immensity of self-denial and self-abnegation, and employs the highest virtues and most resolute purposes of the human mind surviving the ruins of the fall, yet that cannot make it true money, cannot prevent its being condemned. Although in part it be made up of material, which, if it had the right stamp, if it were coined in the king's mint, would be admirable, yet being mixed with base alloy and forged, and being stamped for self and not God, it is spurious, sinful, and must be rejected. No matter what the virtue, the morality, the self-denial, the apparent holiness may be, if manufactured for self, as a passport to heaven, it is against the very law of the kingdom of heaven, which admits no man but merely as a lost sinner, with nothing of his own but guilt, nothing in himself that can gain heaven, and admits the believing soul not even on the ground of faith and love, but solely on the ground of Christ's righteousness and mercy, on the ground of God's unpurchased love in Christ. So that even love itself and faith itself, if you could suppose them to be brought as a work, a merit, a purchase, a passport of the sinner's virtue, would lose their righteous, disinterested nature, and would be spoiled and worthless, being but another form, though the most concealed and subtle form,

of self-love and self-reliance. If you would be saved and be perfect, you must trust Christ for all, must throw yourself on him for all, as a mere guilty, death-deserving sinner, deserving of death, even though believing; and with neither love nor faith nor works as a ground of pardon, or title to mercy, or assurance of heaven, but merely and submissively throwing yourself on Christ, forgetting everything but submission, but duty, but love, but Christ, losing sight of self, forgetting self, losing self and self-anxiety in the sweetness of submission, in the happiness of trusting in Christ.

This simple, single-eyed, self-forgetting submission and trust, is love, is faith, is obedience, is works, is true piety, all in one, and one in all; Christ being the soul and end of all, and all being the result of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Now the motives of the gospel, as applied to self, are applied simply to bring self to Christ, that this wondrous, heavenly change from selfishness to love may be wrought in him. The desire of happiness, the hope of heaven, the fear of hell, so far as they are not the product of the Spirit of God, causing the soul to long after him, are mere levers, as it were, put beneath our fallen nature to pry it up and throw it over upon Christ. God uses them as the mere helps of our infirmities, not as anything holy in themselves. He who came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, deals with us, and condescends towards us, not as holy beings, but as sinful; otherwise, we could never be saved. And always these motives are to our regenerated but partially sanctified being only as the crutches which a lame man leans upon, till he may get the use of his limbs, but throws them entirely aside when he recovers. No man in health uses them. Just so it is in heavenly things. The saints in glory have no need of these crutches. The angels have no need of them. There, everything is done from love, not self. None but fallen beings have need of them. Tell a saint in glory that such or such thing is duty,

and you will constrain him more certainly and more instantly, than telling him that such a thing is for his comfort. Or tell him that *love* requires such a thing, and it will be gotten of him more surely than if you could tell him that his own interests require it. But here in our world of sin, amidst imperfection, temptation, and partial sanctification, mixed motives have to be relied upon, and mixed considerations and appeals, made up both of respect to self and God.

But it is the glory of the gospel that in its perfection it frees the soul from this entanglement of motive, and makes the regenerated being a new creature in Christ Jesus; old things are done away, all things are made new, and all things are of God, not of self, and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets the soul free from the law of sin and of death. And when a man's desire of happiness and heaven turns not so much upon selfish expectation, as upon the love of God and the desire of holiness, when it rises from self into God, and when his fear of hell and his dread of the loss of heaven is not so much his fear of punishment as his hatred of sin, and his dread of being left under its dominion, and his sorrow and wretchedness at the thought of being banished from God's presence;—when his desire of safety and happiness is overtopped by his hungerings and thirstings after righteousness, when he can say with David, My soul thirsteth for God, as the hart panteth after the water-brook; whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee? ah, then, the appeals to self are no longer responded to by selfishness, but holy love; they are as pure as the love of God is pure; they are as holy as the motives set before the angels in heaven. Such a man desires heaven and hates hell, because he loves God and hates sin; and the appeal to such love and such hatred is not an appeal to selfishness but to holiness.

We see then plainly that holiness is a thing that grows only in proportion as the soul loses sight of self and is

absorbed in God; and we see that the only way in which a man can lose sight of self, have self put under and hidden from him, is to come to God, and have the glory and the love of God absorb him, being revealed to him in the face of Jesus Christ. It is easy to conquer self, when Christ and his glory fill the heart; impossible when the heart is not filled with and fixed on Christ. If Christ and heaven do not fill the heart, the world and self will; no man can get self out, but by letting Christ in; you cannot possibly remove the darkness, but by letting in the light; and where this heavenly light is not admitted to reign, spiritual depravity and darkness will reign. When a strong man armed keepeth his house, his goods are in peace; it may be stolen goods, as those of Satan are in us; and Satan is the strong man armed, in possession of our souls, which he keeps in peace as his goods, though it is only the peace of spiritual death, to be succeeded by the darkness, fires, and chains of his own prison, unless Christ come to the rescue of the soul. But when he does come, when a stronger than self and Satan shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. So it is with Christ against self and Satan in the soul; and this is the only way in which self can be overcome, by Christ entering and reigning.

Here again we see plainly that happiness is a thing that comes only of love. God himself is happy, because God is love. Self-denial is happiness, where there is love. Labor is happiness, where there is love. This is a lesson we must learn before we can be fitted for heaven. We must lose self in Christ. We must lose our life, let it go, let self go, be content that anything should happen to it, care nothing about it, and then we save it;—or rather, Christ saves it for us, Christ gives it back to us, Christ gives himself to us as a new self, takes up his dwelling in us as the self of self, the soul of our souls, the object and end of everything, and then we are happy. In this life

we must learn, as in a storm, to throw self overboard, and then the ship is safe. Where Christ abides and reigns, there is nothing but peace and happiness. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose soul is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. This humble, unquestioning, submissive confidence in Christ is the reign of Christ. It is the leaving of everything with Christ, and the seeking to do his will.

But to do this, to get rid of self in this manner, we must come to Christ only. We cannot do this, establish this victory, of ourselves. If Christ does *not* reign, self *will* reign. There is, moreover, a counterfeit of this losing sight of self, *without* Christ; but it is all vain, no better than before, counterfeit money. It may cost much, and men may look upon it as very precious coin, but it is worthless apart from Christ. Any one might think that a man taking a vow of perpetual poverty, and going about in hospitals and prisons, to feed the sick, to watch beside the dying, had thoroughly abnegated himself, lost sight of self. But no, not unless Christ be there. If Christ be not there, such abnegation of self is only a more perfect exaltation of self, a subtle form of self-seeking and of pride. If such abnegation be done out of love, done for Christ, then indeed it is goodness; but if from an eye to reward, if to be seen of men, if from the terrors of an angry conscience, then there is no soundness in it.

Men have sometimes committed crimes, for which they have condemned themselves to years of penance, and have gone about the world apparently dead to the world, because the fire within them has calcined the temptations without. The fire within them has burned up the delusions of the world and of sense around them, and made self-denial itself an intense though delusive relief, delusive, because not united with Christ, not practised for Christ, but really for self. Undoubtedly, in this way there may be much apparent virtue manufactured by sin, and much deliverance from sin effected by selfishness. On the prairies it is

said that the Indians, when caught by a fire, when the roaring sound of a fire sweeping towards them is heard, just light a fire themselves in the centre where they are, and fire meets fire, so that they stand unscathed by the danger. Just so it may be with human passion. Passion against passion is strong. Many a man has escaped the fires of intemperance and sensuality consuming others around him, only because he had lighted another fire, the fire of another ruling passion in his soul. And so the fire of an angry conscience may burn up everything around it, and produce marvels of apparent self-denial and conquest over sin, and yet not bring the soul to Christ, but rather leave it like a blasted heath in the desert. Now on the other hand, if the fire of Christ's love be lighted in the soul, not only will the fires of temptation and of sinful passion go out, but the fruits of real holiness, the fruits of love will abound, and the soul will be like a watered garden, and Christ's love like the Tree of Life in the midst of it. What a mistake do men make in the attempt to produce holiness without coming to Christ! It is painful effort, that ends in vanity and painfulness. As the prophet says, it is ploughing upon the rock, it is gathering wages to put them into a bag with holes, it is feeding on the wind, and following after the East wind. There can be neither freedom, nor peace, nor the fruits of genuine piety, away from Christ, but nothing but bondage and fear.

Joy is a fruit that will not grow
  In nature's barren soil;
All we can boast, till Christ we know,
  Is vanity and toil.

O that God would impress this lesson upon us! It is worth thousands of gold and silver, this deep sense of our own poverty, helplessness, guilt, and misery out of Christ. The knowledge of his own poverty that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. Indeed, the sense of our vanity, sinfulness, and misery out of

Christ is itself great riches. If out of this vanity and poverty you would rise into the riches of eternity, come to Christ. If out of this bondage of sin you would rise into the liberty of holiness, come to Christ. If from this prison of selfishness, where your soul is rusting in chains for the Judgment of the Great Day, you would go forth at large into the air of love and heaven, come to Christ. If in the Judgment of the Great Day you would stand safe and happy, with heaven within your soul, Come to Christ!

O save me from myself, Saviour Divine!
Then only I'm redeemed, when I am thine.
Turn Thou mine eye, my heart, my life to Thee,
That even in self, Christ only I may see.

Fain would I make my Lord my only aim,
In all pursuits still think on his dear name,
For Him prepare my soul, from sin forbear,
Aspire to Heaven, because my Lord is there.

Lord, Thou canst conquer self, but Thou alone!
Set up within my soul thy glorious throne;
Let every thought, wish, expectation be
Brought in subjection, by thy love, to Thee.

Then will I flee on angels' wings abroad,
All care dismissed but just to please my Lord.
'Tis perfect freedom, if Thou reign in me,
And where Thou art, there shall thy servant be!

CHAPTER XXXI.

Justification by Faith.—The religion of Faith and the system of Works delineated.—Faith producing Works.—Justification followed by glorification.

A MAN of great intellectual powers, and ardent but not perfect piety, once heard two Pilgrims of Apostolical authority conversing in the way to Heaven. One of them said, Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by Faith without the deeds of the law. The other said, Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. The man went away and reported that there was a quarrel between those two, and that the latter of the two was *strawy* in his sayings. The mistaken man was Martin Luther.

Now there is so far from being a quarrel between Paul and James, that there is not even a difference. The two passages are only opposite sides of the same great truth. We were once travelling with a little company of missionaries in Turkey, when we came in sight of a beautiful distant olive-orchard on the side of a hill, with the wind agitating the branches, and turning the under side of the leaves to the sun. There arose quite a contest among us as to the color of those olive-leaves. Some asserted that it was pure dark green, for that was universally the color of the olive. Others said as confidently that it was a silvery grey, appealing to the sight before us. When we came to the orchard itself, we found both assertions to be

true, the under side of the leaves turned up by the wind to the sun in our first position showing them of a silvery grey, while the upper side, with the sun falling on that, in our next position, showed their natural color of a beautiful fresh green. So here in these two texts are the two sides of the same precious olive-branch of truth, the great distinguishing truth of the gospel, the truth of justification and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ. One text shows the side towards God in Christ, the other the side towards man; both are equally true, indeed are one and the same truth. It is at one and the same time an undeniable truth, that faith without works is the only true religion, and yet that faith without works is no religion at all, and also, that works without faith are no better than sin.

A religion of works is a selfish, self-seeking, bargaining, distrustful religion. A religion of faith is a disinterested, self-denying, self-forgetting, confiding religion. A religion of works is scrupulous, fearful, cramping, prison-like, and superstitious. A religion of faith is unsuspicious, fearless, open-hearted, generous, and free. A religion of works is like waxen flowers, or like fruits wrought and colored in stone, and it may be with such exquisite pains and skill, that a bee would light upon them and a bird peck at them. So may the fruits of genuine piety be imitated in a religion of works, and they may successfully deceive mankind, not knowing the inward fountain, but not God, who looketh on the heart. A religion of faith is like the natural, spontaneous fruits and flowers in Eden, not only fresh and fair to the sight, but good for medicine and food, and of a sweet and wholesome fragrance.

Now there are only these two religions in the world, the true and the counterfeit, faith without works and works without faith. The religion of faith is the only true, the only possible religion for fallen beings. For such there can be no such thing as a religion of justifying works, such beings having no works to offer but works of sin, or works mingled with sin, and therefore works needing to be

forgiven. But if you present to God as the ground of your salvation works needing to be forgiven, you present not piety, but impiety and presumption. You present to him as merit what can deserve and bring nothing but condemnation. As a fallen being you can present to him nothing but faith; that is, you can only trust in his mercy without works, having no works to bring but your sins, or the good things of God spoiled by your sins, and having nothing that you can do, but just submit and trust, willing that he should do what he pleases. If you are *not* a fallen being, then you do not need works, nor anything else for salvation, neither Saviour nor atonement, but may claim protection from the justice and goodness of God. But if you *are* a fallen being, a sinful creature, you can have no works to bring, but what are proofs of sin. Therefore, the only true religion possible for you is that of faith without works, that of submission and trust, as a guilty, lost sinner.

There is no other true religion possible. There are, indeed, things that are called religions, as there are that are called Gods many and Lords many; but they are pure irreligion and falsehood, the work of Satan, a part of the great dread array of wiles and stratagems, delusions, temptations, and lies, with which, according to God's Word, the god of this world blinds the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them. But there is no other true religion possible than that of faith. In the very nature of true religion this is demonstrable. There cannot be a religion of justifying works, which is not a religion of lies. And no matter how elevated, refined, noble, or excellent the works may be supposed to be, the supposition of justifying merit in them, of a purchase of salvation by them, rots and putrifies them. For even love itself presented as merit, and faith itself, presented as a justifying work, becomes a vain, palpable lie. The very fact of presenting

it as a merit, for reward, proves that it is not true love or true faith, but a forgery.

Let us endeavor to illustrate this more definitely. As a creature of God's bounty, you owe God everything, and love first of all. In paying him this love, you can do nothing of merit, nothing as a work for justification. If you do *not* pay it, you defraud God; if you do pay it, you do no more than your duty, you can claim nothing as merit. Can a man merit anything for loving infinite goodness? Is not the *not* loving such goodness proof of indescribable depravity, of a deep, deadly wrong in the nature? If love is offered for merit, for reward, there can be no merit in it. The very idea of a purposed benefit from it changes its nature. The idea of one's loving, because he fears punishment and desires reward, is an absurdity. Suppose you should hear a man saying that he loves another very much, because he has a fortune of five hundred thousand dollars, and he hopes to obtain a large part of it. You would say that he does indeed love the other's money very much, but not the man himself, not his happiness, his virtues. The love is self-love, nothing more. So in regard to God. If we present anything to him on the meritorious ground of justification, to gain heaven by that, it is mere self-love, nothing more, even though we pretend to present faith and love. Faith and love cannot justify; it is Christ alone that justifies, and he justifies the sinner simply by means of faith as the way, not by faith as the ground, or faith as a merit in the sinner; for the sinner has no merit, and even in coming by faith and love, comes only as a sinner.

It is therefore evident that faith without works is the only true religion, the only religion possible for mankind. But here some one will turn upon us and say, out of God's own Word in the Apostle James, that faith without works is dead. And yet we say that faith without works is the only true religion possible for mankind. Very well.

There is no contradiction here, and both these propositions are perfectly true. By faith without works, James means a faith which does not produce works, which is no faith at all but devil's faith, believing, trembling, disobeying. There is a great difference between faith without works as the way of salvation, that is, a reliance only on the unbought, undeserved mercy of Christ without works, and faith not producing works, which is a dead faith. Faith without works is sure to produce works, and will show itself by works, and is true piety; that is, submission, trust, confidence in God, the acceptance of his way of salvation, without any trust in oneself. A man thus coming to God by faith without works, comes indeed not bringing any works to rely on, not bringing to God anything as a ground of acceptance and pardon, but trusting, believing, having faith only. But this faith is not dead, though it be faith without works; but it is a faith that will *produce* works, a living faith, or else it is a lie; it is no faith, but death. As a faith *producing* works, it is a *religion* of works, and in this view the only true religion of works in the world, or possible, is the religion of justification by Christ alone, through faith alone *without* works. That is the only religion that produces true works of piety, the religion of faith without works. But in order that it may be a *living* faith, a faith which will *produce* works, it *must* be a faith *without* works, a simple trust, a submissive resting on God's mere love and mercy, and not on works. But the Apostle James means by faith without works, a faith *not* producing works, which indeed is false and dead. There is no difference between Paul and James, nor ever was, or ever will be, although the one declares that there is no true religion but that of faith without works, and the other that faith without works is dead.

If a man does not come by faith alone, trusting willingly to God in Christ, but attempts to bring works as stepping-stones, or works as purchase money, or works as bribes,

or works as merit, he comes without faith at all; it must be either faith alone, faith without works, or no faith at all. If he comes by faith alone, he comes with that which will produce works; but if he comes by works, he comes with neither works nor faith, both being dead, both false; he comes by lies. So there is no true religion possible in the world but faith alone. The best works are false without faith; they are sin and condemnation. They may be performed to gain heaven, but they are the way to hell. They may be works of self-denial in its extremest form, but it is self-denial not out of faith and love, but self-denial out of self-seeking, self-salvation, self-love. This, instead of being disinterestedness, is only the highest, largest form of distrust and selfishness. It is unwillingness to leave our salvation in God's hands alone, to God's mercy alone, but a determination to hew out a foundation for ourselves, on which to climb to heaven in our own security, not leaving it to God's mere mercy, not trusting in Christ, not throwing all on him. Now the very best of all good things that men can do for such a purpose, if it be not faith and love that inspire them, are worthless, they are sin and death. A man may give his body to be burned, may bestow all his goods to feed the poor, may undergo all sufferings, and gain all mysteries of knowledge, but if this come not from faith and love, it is mere self-seeking and worthless.

We may regard this as severe reasoning, but it is plain, it is demonstrable, it is the reasoning of the Apostle. There is no escaping from it. Indeed, in our transactions one with another, we reason in precisely the same way. We make an entire distinction between acts of disinterestedness performed regardless of reward, and acts of selfishness or of self-love, performed *for* reward. If you were to see a person fall overboard from a ship under full sail in a raging sea, and the next moment beheld a seaman plunge to rescue the drowning man at the peril of his own life, you would say it was a noble act, an act of sublime

benevolence, generosity, and disinterestedness. But if immediately afterwards you learned that that man, being enormously wealthy, had beforehand made a contract with that seaman to give him a hundred thousand dollars in case of such an accident, provided he would save him, your tide of admiration would be arrested at once. You would only admire the love of money in the seaman, which could overcome the fear, and almost the certainty, of death, and produce such a daring venture.

Now the holiness which is produced in a man's life merely from the fear of hell and the hope of heaven, is manifestly no better than this. The works thus performed afford not only no possibility of justification, but if the man have not faith and love, they are proofs of guilt. They show that self-love can produce results of self-denial and morality, which love to God cannot; or rather which love to God *would* have produced, had it been present, as it ought, but it was not; there was not regard enough for God, to do what regard for self accomplished. Can anything show more conclusively that the law of the whole being is selfishness; a law of sin and death, and not the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus? The man does for himself, for a high self-interest, what he will not do for God, from love and duty. It is complete demonstration that he is a selfish being, and his very religion is fraud and selfishness, and instead of justifying him, condemns him.

But when, being justified by grace, through faith, the soul passes into a living morality out of gratitude and love, then there is no longer any condemnation. Justification by Faith always produces a walking after the Spirit, for whom he justified, them he also glorified. True holiness is a glorification begun on earth. It is a change into the image of the Saviour from glory to glory. If any man serve me, says our Blessed Lord, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honor. This daily serving and following of Christ is the morality of justifying faith;

and we have already traced the blessedness and power of it as a *daily* life, the blessedness of that Word *daily*, in our Lord's commands of self-denying love and duty.

A man by daily repetition of love and duty becomes *habitually* a Christian; it is a second nature to him, and thus it is easy. A man who is punctual, diligent, and faithful, *daily*, in secret prayer, will be *bound* to prayer, after a few years, by such an adamantine chain in his very nature, as it will be almost impossible to break. And so, habits of right *feeling* as well as of right *action*, wear their channels of experience so deep in the soul, and become so powerful, that you cannot turn them back; and the obstacles thrown in to hinder them are themselves swept onward out of the way. This is the great blessedness of conscientiously following Christ *daily*. The Christian should be greatly encouraged by it, knowing that his strength will be greater by the faithful use of the measure of grace to-day vouchsafed to him, and of the doors of usefulness to-day opened before him. To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly. It is the power of habit; therefore avail yourself of it; therefore suffer not yourself in little neglects. If there be acts of duty which you are tempted to neglect to-day, step up to them at once, and perform them; for it is no great thing, no burden, after all; and the same things will be incomparably easier to-morrow, if you are energetic and punctual with them to-day; but if you yield to neglect to-day, it will be more difficult to-morrow. And it is surprising what a great compound interest of difficulty a present neglect adds to future duty. The mere neglect of a simple call, which you ought to have made to-day, becomes, by repeated neglects, a great burden; and several such things together may deprive the soul of all its peace and comfort, and make it feel like a bankrupt, surrounded with pitiless creditors, and neither knowing how to pay, nor what nor whom to begin with. Do to-day what belongs to to-day, and to-morrow's work will be very

easy. But if you neglect to-day what belongs to to-day, you make the performance of to-morrow's duty more difficult *for* to-morrow, and you add, besides, the burden of to-day's neglect. It is just like a debt, for which provision may be made with comparative ease and readiness, before it is contracted, or before it becomes due; but once really due, and yet not paid, once the mind and business burdened with it as a debt not met when it ought to have been, and then every day makes it more difficult, every day makes it less probable that it will be cancelled, and demands a hundred times the exertion which at first would have easily removed it.

Every day spent in a willing, punctual faithfulness in Christ's service makes the next day easier. The difficulties do not increase, but diminish. But if they increase, the increase of grace is such, that even the great succeeding difficulties are easier to meet and overcome than the first little ones. Follow Christ well to-day, and you shall not, to-morrow, meet with anything too strong for you. Follow Christ closely in serving him to-day, and where he is, there shall his servant be, to-morrow, and where you, his servant are, to-morrow, there will he be with you. Christ never issued this note of command, with a *daily* as the time of it, without a daily provision of grace to meet it. Put your name on the back of it, and present it daily to him, and however large the amount he will pay it.

Moreover, if at any time difficulties increase, the soul that is following Christ and trusting in him, knows that every day it is getting nearer to the end of them. It is but a little while. These light afflictions are but for a moment. They are light, in comparison with the exceeding and eternal weight of glory they are appointed to work out. Though ever so heavy, they are light, when the soul is enabled to remember and feel that they are but for a moment.

Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall;
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my heaven, my all;
There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast.

A man is saved amidst trials, from the deadly *sting* of trials, by such hope. And likewise the feeling of the shortness of time and the nearness of eternity diminishes every burden. The soul feels somewhat as Paul did in the near prospect of the heavenly world. I am now ready to be offered. Thy crown is shining near. It seems as if we could see Paul stopping for the first time to take breath amidst his conflicts, and looking back upon them. The end was so near, that all seemed now done, the victory gained, the struggle over. So with every faithful soul, as it nears the New Jerusalem. Christ is with it, and more and more with it, the nearer it comes to the close of its course of humble faithfulness in following him. The promise begins its fulfilment this side of the grave, that where I am there shall my servant be. There is a land Beulah in the Christian pilgrimage, where the faithful soul can sometimes almost see and travel with the white-robed spirits. So the author of the Pilgrim's Progress found it in his own experience. In this country, says he, the sun shineth night and day; wherefore this was beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and also out of the reach of Giant Despair; neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle. Here they were within sight of the City they were going to: also here met them some of the inhabitants thereof; for in this land the shining ones commonly walked, because it was upon the borders of heaven. Here they had more rejoicing than in parts more remote from the kingdom to which they were bound; and drawing near to the City they had yet a more

perfect view thereof. The reflection of the sun upon the City was so extremely glorious, that they could not as yet with open face behold it, but through an instrument made for that purpose. Also, as they went on, there met them two men in raiment that shone like gold, also their faces shone as the light. These men asked the Pilgrims whence they came, and they told them. They also asked them where they had lodged, what difficulties and dangers, what comforts and pleasures they had met in the way, and they told them. Then said the men that met them, You have but two difficulties more to meet with, and then you are in the City.

Only two difficulties more, and one of these was death! Now this enchanting passage is only a description of what may take place this side the river of death, with the soul that has followed Jesus faithfully to the borders of it. Where I am, there shall my servant be. Where Christ is, there his people are, even here, in this world; and sometimes heaven, as it were, is opened, and the veil is taken away, and celestial things are so ravishingly clear, and doubt and darkness are so far removed, that, as Bunyan beautifully says, you cannot from this place so much as see Doubting Castle. Where are the soul's conflicts then? O then what delight and peace and ease the soul finds in daily following Christ, daily communing with him, daily enjoying his presence! Only two difficulties more, and then the soul will be in the City!

But all this sweetness of spiritual enjoyment, all this joy and peace in believing and in walking with Christ, is only a discipline and introduction, even when it is vouchsafed in the highest degree, into the fulness of the promise. It is a discipline *of* introduction into that fulness of glory covered up beneath the terms of the promise. Where I am, there shall my servant be, hath its fulfilment only in heaven. There is Christ's abode, there his eternal dwelling-place, there the glorious place of his declaration to the Jews, Before Abraham was I am, and there the region of

which he spake when he said, No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven. Where I am, there shall my servant be. There, where Isaiah saw his glory, and the Seraphim veiling their faces before him, and crying, Holy, Holy, Holy! There shall his servants be, and they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is, and his name shall be in their foreheads, and they shall follow him whithersoever he goeth, and they shall be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, clothed in a body like unto his glorious body, having their robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, being satisfied in God's likeness, and without fault before the throne of God. All this Christ refers to, when he says in the last prayer for his disciples, Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.

The emphasis upon this last expression is most extraordinary. It is intimated that the beholding of the Saviour's glory, as it was with the Father before the world was, and is now, and evermore will be displayed in the heavenly world, constitutes the fulness, the completeness, of blessing and honor in heaven. The being where Christ is, to behold his glory, comprehends all that can be conceived of blessedness. The beholding of Christ, as he is, and where he is, will be attended with a transformation into his image; the beholding of his glory will be accompanied with a perfect reflection of that glory. The beholding of Christ in heaven, and the being with him where he is, will be the consummation of glory and blessedness in his saints; and hence the intense longing expressed in the New Testament, by those to whom these mysteries of our future being have been revealed, for the appearing of our Saviour, and the looking for and hastening into that great day of God, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe. This longing for the appearing of Christ, this intense desire for the time

of his coming, was a peculiarity of the New Testament saints, a characteristic of their piety, which, in its peculiar form, has almost passed away. Believers in Christ were characterized by Paul as those who love his appearing, who look forward to it with yearning and delight, as the time when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality; when the building of God shall be assumed by the soul, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, even that celestial body, like unto the Saviour's glorious body, in which it shall dwell for ever in his presence, for ever with the Lord.

Where I am, there shall my servant be. They are great words, words of infinite weight of meaning, words of transcendent inconceivable glory, words covering up an eternal and exceeding weight of glory. Where Christ is, there God is, and God's infinite love and happiness are revealed in Christ. Where Christ is, there heaven is, and the source and fountain of heaven's light and glory. Where Christ is, there all good beings are, all the holy, loving beings of the universe, concentrated and circled in adoring ranks around him, the visible centre of their bliss, the author of their holiness. Now of all this glory Christ says, in the midst of it, To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He speaks also of his disciples and servants as partakers of his own joy; and the welcome of his servants is even this, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord! The joy of thy Lord! What a heaven of glory and blessedness is contained in that one expression! The joy of thy Lord! Who can measure its degree, who can conceive or fathom the infinite depth of its greatness, the infinite intensity of its bliss? And yet, that is the joy that awaits every faithful follower and servant of the glorious Redeemer; the Redeemer's own joy, a thing no more to be measured or fathomed than the actual infinitude of God. They shall be with him where

he is, they shall behold his glory, they shall enter into his joy. For that joy, set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down for ever at the right hand of the throne of God. There the saints shall walk with him in glory, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, received to the possession of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are faithful unto death, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

But there is yet another wonderful expression, connected with another great series of promises, which is as another gallery of pictures thrown open by our Lord, to excite our imaginations, allure our affections, and animate us in our Christian pilgrimage. He leads us up the heights of these Delectable Mountains, and in a great variety of ways, with many changes of coloring, from many points of view, directs our eye to the prospects before us. *If any man serve me, him will my Father honor.* Sometimes the soul, in meditating upon this expression, finds it becoming as a chariot of fire, in which the heart is carried up to heaven, to see things by the Spirit of God, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it ever entered into the heart of man to conceive, which God hath prepared for those who love him. Him will my Father honor! What a transcendent significance of glory! To be honored of God! What series of images, or analogies, or reasonings, can possibly enable us, in this our mortal state, to come to any approximation to the understanding of the vastness and intensity of meaning covered up beneath such language? Rise up, child of such destinies, and go forth from thy place of humble, silent, secret prayer, beneath the fulness of the starry skies, in some bright hour at midnight, and gaze with the telescope of science over the illimitable fields of space, thick sown with rolling worlds! Thy teacher in astronomy demonstrates to thee that the realms of this universe contain millions on millions of worlds so remote from thine, that millions on millions of

years would not enable thee to reach them, though travelling with the swiftness of light; and when thou shouldst arrive at the outermost point of vision possible to thee now, there would still lie before thee to be traversed millions on millions more of glorious worlds, as far beyond thy vision, and as many years beyond thy reach. When thou beginnest to comprehend something of the idea of such a bewildering infinitude of power and glory, then thou seemest to thyself, especially in thy sinful nature, a speck, a mote, an atom of dust, an insignificant, vile creature, that may well be dropped out and lost or thrown away, amidst such costly, boundless universes of magnificent beings and things. Now then come back from thy trance of amazement to the reality of the words of Christ, and then thou wilt find and see that thou, thou thyself, if thou servest Christ sincerely in thy little day and space of time and action, art to be honored of the God, the Creator, Possessor, Supporter, of all this power and glory, with an honor, of which this material universe itself can give no adequate conception, an honor never bestowed upon that universe, an honor which will mark thee in the midst of that universe as an object of greater wonder, surprise, and occasioned admiration of God in Christ Jesus, and of gratitude, love, and praise, than the whole material universe besides. Does this seem like the language of exaggeration? Study the system of redemption, and the meaning of God's promises, and you will see that the honor of the Sons of God in Christ's image, and the glory of the riches of the inheritance of saints in light, *cannot* be exaggerated. You will hear the Saviour declaring to his Father, The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them. And you will hear the promise unto men, He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; he shall keep my words, and my Father shall love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that confesseth me before men, him will I also confess before my Father and his holy angels. He that overcometh, I will

make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, New Jerusalem, and my new name. And the very strain of invitation and shout of welcome unto the region and possession of such beatitude past utterance, is this, BLESSED OF MY FATHER! Before the throne of God they dwell, and they serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Now these things are a great mystery of condescension and love; so great, that in some respects there is no mystery to be compared with them. We know not what to make of them, and in some moods of mind they almost stagger credibility, it seems so impossible that God can so honor and bless such sinful worms as we are. The mystery is somewhat opened and cleared up indeed, when we think that the ground and object of all this glory is the honor of Christ; but then again when we think how miserably poor, little, and imperfect is the utmost honor and service we can pay him, in comparison with that which is his due, again the mystery appears amazing. But there stand the promises of God. They are eternal realities with all their mystery of glory. And so is the crown of glory before us, which is soon to be revealed. It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Come, Lord! cried Richard Baxter, transported by his meditations on this glory yet to be revealed, and convinced that if the work of Christ on earth, in which his soul delighted, was to him full of joy and blessedness, with all its difficulties and trials, then certainly the beholding of

Christ's glory in heaven, and the partaking of it there, would be a joy and happiness past all present knowledge and conception :—

Come, Lord, when grace hath made me meet,
  Thy blessed face to see,
For if thy *work* on *earth* be sweet,
  What will thy glory be!

Then shall I end my sad complaints,
  And weary, sinful days,
And join with those triumphant saints
  That sing Jehovah's praise.

My knowledge of that life is small,
  The eye of faith is dim,
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
  And I shall be with him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Glorification completed.—Heaven a perfect state, both relatively and absolutely, but such perfectness not attained this side of Heaven.—And in Heaven itself, all perfection is in and of Christ.—Conclusion of the Windings of the River of the Water of Life.

AMIDST the visions of the Apocalypse there is one scene of heavenly glory, formed by the presence of the redeemed from earth, said to be *without fault before the throne of God.* This is a wonderful declaration, and a most glorious mystery of godliness. Indeed, of all mysteries, this is one of the greatest, that a sinful man should be found without fault before the throne of God. But a sinful man becomes in Christ a new creature. It is not the old man, full of depravity and sins, that is without fault before the throne of God, but the new man, the new creation out of the ashes of the old, the man created anew in Christ Jesus, and created for the purpose of being presented before the throne of God in his likeness.

They are the redeemed from among men. They are the first fruits unto God and the Lamb. They are the subjects of his regenerating love and grace. They were once creatures of sin and of destruction, with natures of such voluntary evil, that they were called by Divine Inspiration itself, children of wrath, and children of the devil. Now they are before the throne of God in his likeness. Now they are without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Now they are *without fault before the throne of God.*

This is the result of the great mystery of justification, which itself steps back into the mystery of sanctification, and that into the mystery of regeneration, and that again into the mystery of redemption, and that into the unfathomable depths of the mystery of God's love. These steps are traced in the forward direct order by Paul's logic thus: foreknowledge, predestination, calling and conformity to the image of God's dear Son, justification, glorification. John in the Apocalypse sets us down at the last step, glorification; without fault before the throne of God.

There is here what might almost be called a change in personal identity. Men talk of the great mystery of the resurrection of the body, but here is a greater mystery by far, the resurrection of the soul from death into life eternal, the same soul, and yet a different soul—the same soul and yet a new soul in Christ Jesus, a soul absolved from guilt, once dead in trespasses and sins, now alive in holiness; once corrupted and defiled, with the image of God destroyed, and that of Satan adopted, but now cleansed, purified, sanctified, the likeness of Satan gone eternally, the likeness of God renewed eternally, and the image of Christ made the soul's eternal identity, by the union of the soul with Christ, Christ as the soul of the soul, abiding in it, and shining through and from it for ever. This is a transaction so wonderful, a transformation so immeasurable in glory, and so incomprehensible, save only by the revelation of the Spirit of God, that there is no mystery in the universe to be compared with it, save only that mystery of the incarnation and death of the Son of God, which laid the foundation for it.

Now this is undoubtedly the glorified state of the soul, and belongs to nothing but that. It can be affirmed absolutely of no previous state, no condition of attainment in the processes of sanctification in this world. It is the completion and absolute fulfilment of all the processes of regeneration, sanctification, justification, redemption, in Christ and in Christ's glory. It cannot be said absolutely,

at any previous step before this state of glory, that the soul is *without fault.* There may be the image of Christ perfectly visible and undoubted at a previous stage, and it may be long time visible, so that no person in the world doubts it. But that is not to be of necessity *without fault.* Christ himself is represented as sitting as the Great Refiner and Purifier of his people, over the crucible in which he is trying their souls, looking into it, till he sees his own face reflected in the clear, unspotted mirror. But that may be, and yet it may not be possible that it should be said *without fault.* For the dross may gather again. It *may* gather, and it *does* gather, notwithstanding all Christ's care, and directly beneath his eye. For in this world there is indwelling corruption still, which shows itself sometimes even in the very fire; and no sooner is one coat of dross removed, and the image of Christ seen shining, than the bright surface begins again to be clouded, and the film gathers; perhaps a different kind of dross, less dark and gross than before, but still the development of indwelling imperfection and sin.

Sometimes the crucible has to be kept in the fire, and the trial maintained almost without cessation, all through life. And never, probably, while in the body, does the soul reach the point where it can be said absolutely, as in the state of glory, *without fault.* The processes which tend to that state, which are to conduct to it and issue in it, may all be going forward, and may have advanced further towards completion in some than in others; seen, indeed, in all their various stages and approximations to the state of glory, and in some cases arising to a very eminent and wonderful degree of continued, undeviating, almost unclouded transformation in the image of Christ. But while these processes are going forward, while there is anything to be accomplished by them, they are not perfect; and while there remains anything in the soul which needs to be corrected, or which may, or might, if left to its development, result in imperfection and sin, the process

conducting to the state of perfection in glory is not complete. It cannot be said of the soul, as in that state, *without fault.*

It can be said neither relatively nor absolutely. For there is still that within the soul which connects it with its past sins, that which is the consequence and result of those sins, and a source of trial, evil, imperfection. There is present fault growing out of past sin, and connecting the soul with it, although it have been ever so bitterly and humbly repented of. It may have been forgiven, but the process of deliverance and redemption from it is not yet completed, and therefore neither in respect to the present nor the past can it ever be said, in such a state, to be *without fault.*

But in the glorified state this is to be said both relatively and absolutely. Absolutely, there is nothing imperfect, nothing tending to sin, no latent quality, or bias, or shade of character, or habit, or seed, or principle, that, if left to development, could produce evil. And relatively, there is no connexion between the soul and past sin, nothing left to the soul which was the result of sin, nothing which could remind the soul that sin ever existed, no scars of sin, no trace of evil, no fault or guilty consciousness of past sin remaining, but all things entirely new, old things done away, and a being existing of unmingled newness in Christ. This being, from the moment of its entering on this glorified state, is absolutely without fault, in respect to all past, all present, all future existence, as absolutely as the angels in heaven. It is free from sin, from all connexion with sin, from all blame of sin, as well as all stain of sin, there being, from the first moment of its glorified state, no remnant of its former sinful state, either as consequence or tendency, connecting its present character, powers, or accountabilities with that. It is wholly another being in Christ, and in respect of the consciousness of holiness, its personal identity may be said to be changed from that of a sinner into that of Christ. The life now

lived is solely that of Christ, the identity now experienced is that of oneness with Christ. There is nothing which can be laid to the charge of this present being, any more than to the charge of Christ himself, for it is as absolutely without fault as Christ is without fault.

And this is the state in which all glorified beings will view it, angels and all intelligences, seeing in it nothing but holiness, and nothing to remind them of sin ; no more remnant of any past connexion with sin, or association with the idea of it, seen in these redeemed spirits of the just made perfect, than in the angels themselves; except indeed the holiness and glory of redemption, the peculiar image of Christ, which, together with the song that they sing, to Him that hath washed us from sin, robed us in white, and redeemed us to God by his blood, will make known to all the universe that these are they who once on earth were lost sinners, but have come out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. But now, in Christ, they are as absolutely *without fault* as if they never had been sinners, and the only thing in themselves to remind any creature in the universe that they ever had been sinners, is that transcendent lustre of their holiness in the image of Christ, that peculiar identity of their souls with Christ, and that singular reflection of Christ's glory from them, above the glory of the angels ; that reflection of the glory of the Lamb, which will mark them as the radiant beings for whom the Lamb was slain. Nothing but that can ever remind the inhabitants of the heavenly world that there ever was or could have been a state in their being, in which it could not be said that they were *without fault.* It is the excess of holiness in them, the peculiar ravishing character of that holiness, as the glory of the Lamb that was slain, and no shade of any mark or remembrance of sin or connexion with it, that would cast the thoughts of any creature in heaven back upon a once sinful state.

But this could never be the case, until the soul reached

this state of glory. Everywhere this side that glorified state, at whatever point of attainment, there was something in the soul itself connecting it immediately with guilt, and forbidding the spiritual spectator, as well as the conscious sinner, to dare to say, *without fault.* Wherever the angels, as they cast down their observant regards upon our world, or ministered in it to those who were to be heirs of salvation, beheld the path of a being under God's guidance shining more and more unto the perfect day, they saw still the path of a sinner, they had to turn an anxious compassionate regard, till they saw the path, with all their anxieties in regard to it, lost from the sinfulness of mortal life, in the holiness and glory of God in eternity. They saw in every creature, however holy, the stain of sin, the remaining power of sin; and if such a creature could have been supposed to be taken, just in that state, though at any point of attainment in holiness whatever, into heaven, without the process of glorification perfected, there would have been seen in such a creature the anomaly of imperfection in heaven, that which would have forbidden its inhabitants to say, *without fault;* that which would have manifested itself to every holy consciousness as a tendency to sin, and a guilty relationship with sin.

But it is not possible to suppose any such thing in heaven. Sin belongs only out of heaven, and all connexion with it ceases there. And just so, perfect holiness, the being absolutely *without fault,* belongs not to a fallen world, and never was and never will be found in it, except only in the person of the Saviour. But it is the supreme and universal blessedness of heaven, it is the glory of the glorified state, that all who enter upon it leave all sin, all stain, all imperfection behind them for ever, and are *without fault before the throne of God.* From the moment they are glorified, it is entirely a new existence, no more to be paralleled or even predicted, by any attainments in a world of sin, than the glory of the flower, as its leaves open to the light of the sun, is to be paralleled by the seed,

as it lies germinating in the earth and surrounded with rottenness. There is a difference, the greatness of which we cannot by any effort conceive, between the state of the soul in a world of sin, a body of death, and a condition of probationary discipline, and its state in a world of perfect holiness, blessedness, and glory. For now we see as through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now we see in sin, and in ignorance because of sin, and this alone makes a difference which we are in no way able to measure. Now are we the Sons of God, if Christ indeed be in us, but yet in so much weakness, darkness, and imperfection, that it doth not yet appear what we shall be, scarcely more than, if you should open the ground, and examine a grain of corn, which had been put beneath the earth in the spring to die, you could tell what it will be, when the golden field of grain is waving in the harvest.

But there is another point and revelation of shining light, with all our ignorance. We know, adds the Apostle, that when he, the Son of God, shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. When he, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. This being *without fault* before the throne of God, is a being *in the likeness of the Saviour*. For creatures who have once sinned, the being without fault consists in that, and could not be without that. It is the Redeemer's righteousness, which his saints will wear, but they will not wear it only as a robe, but it will be in them, as their nature, their very existence, in Christ. They will be without fault, because Christ, into whose image they are transfigured, is without fault. They will be without fault, because there will be nothing left in them, nothing seen in them, but the image of Christ. Even this vile body shall be changed, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. Thus he will present every child of God perfect and complete before the throne of God in his likeness, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Thus will he be glorified in his saints, and then it will be known what is

the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. Christ is now in every saint the hope of glory; Christ will be in every saint the possession, realization, and fulness of glory.

But of this we can understand now only a little. If we are the children of God, we know something, as the Apostle John knew something, of what his meaning was, when he said, Now are we the Sons of God. We know that that is a joy unspeakable and full of glory, to be made partakers of the Spirit, to be changed by that Spirit from sin to holiness, even to begin to be so changed. Of that glory the Apostle had had experience, when he said, Now are we the Sons of God. He had seen also the Saviour's glory on the Mount. But there is a glory to come, of which John himself had no adequate conception, and could only say, It doth not yet appear what we shall be; save this only, that when He shall appear, we shall be like him. It would seem then, that the experience now of a participation in the holiness of Christ, great as the glory and blissfulness of that is, is but the preparation for that change into his glorified state, of the glory of which we can as yet form no definite imagination.

It will be a wondrous thing indeed, the wonder of all heaven, to see those beings from this world of sin, in the glorified state of Christ, and without fault before the throne of God. What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? These subjects of wonder and interrogation in the heavenly world, these representatives of the glory of the Saviour, these that have passed the gates of death, whence came they? John Foster once asked these questions, and apostrophized an answer to them, in a grandeur of spirit which language can but faintly intimate. Whence came they? From darkness and sin, from meanness and degradation, from want and from sorrow, from a subjection to all the irregularities of all the elements, from the very dread of death, which has given them to such felicities. Their mortal tabernacle

fell asunder, and let the captive spirit go free. It was a change inconceivable, unutterable, from the ignorance and darkness of this world into the amazing pursuits and glories of that! *Who* are they? One was a Lazarus, lying cold and disordered at a rich man's gate. Another was pointed at by the finger of scorn; a third inclosed by the walls of a prison; a fourth perished in the martyr's flame. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. They were the off-scouring of all things. Now they are the wonder of heaven. Now they are rich, now ennobled, now they are at rest, now happy for ever. Now they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of them shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

O glory, glory, glory, beyond all glory ever seen or known, this side the completion of redemption, and the glorification of the Saviour in his Saints! For, consider the language used by the inspired Revealer in shadowing forth this state of heavenly glorification. *Before the throne of God without fault.* Absolute perfection, secured everlastingly by the oneness of the soul with Christ. Perfection not relative to man merely, nor angels, but to God, as a participation of God's own perfection in Christ! Perfection BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD, before that reality in heaven, beneath the shadows of which on earth, the great prophet, who saw it only in a vision, was compelled to cry out, when he heard the voice of the Seraphim, Holy, Holy, Holy! Woe is me, for I am undone! *Before the throne of God without fault.* Before the throne of God in glory! And therefore, a faultlessness infinitely perfect, a glory and a blessedness unchangeable and ever-

lasting; unchangeable, save only from glory to glory, and from happiness to happiness; a glory and happiness everlasting and boundless as the perfection of God!

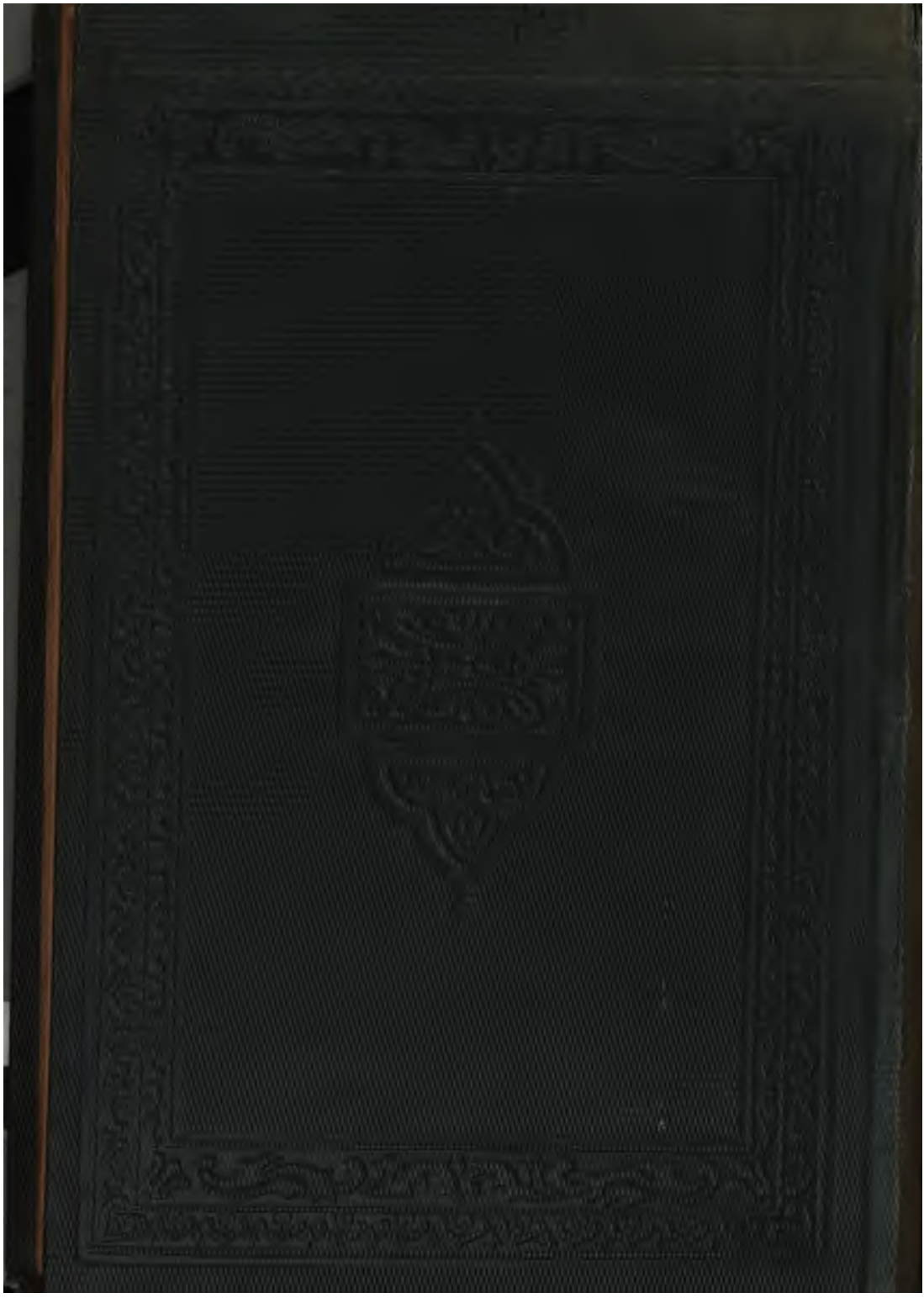
There is no pause here, no darkness, nothing that admits of mistake, all doubt and fear are gone for ever, the certainty of continuance and progression in this state being the certainty and immutability of the Divine Attributes. There was doubt and darkness and fear on earth, and though the path below rose upwards into increasing light, yet there may have been doubt, gloom, and uncertainty, up even to the very point of death and glory; but that point reached, the soul for ever freed from spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, cut loose from all possibility of fall or change, is launched in God's own light, in an identity with Christ's own existence, on the boundless sea of God's perfections, where it passes the possibility of created imagination, this side the grave, to know or track its glory. Then cometh the Hallelujah of victory! Then is fulfilled the last mystery of holiness, of which the Apostle has said, Behold I show it to you. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory! O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!

By all this we see plainly that that expression, *the Spirits of just men made perfect*, conveys the image of a sight, which we come to in heaven alone. A man may be a just man and not a perfect man. He may be justified, and may have passed from condemnation and bondage into life and freedom in Christ Jesus, and yet by no means be perfect. The spirits of the just may be on earth; the just

made perfect are only in heaven. But this last state is immeasurably more glorious. To say of a man that he is just, that he is justified in Christ, is full of glory; it is the beginning of glory. But to say *the just made perfect,* is to reach a point, where angels and principalities and powers will never be wearied with gazing; where indeed all that they have beheld in all the past eternity of God's wonders of wisdom, power, and love, will leave them still astonished and enraptured, with a new surpassing rapture, at this before inconceivable revelation of the glory of God in the Saviour seen through his saints. This is that glorification together with Christ, to which the Apostle Paul refers, when he speaks of the glory which shall be revealed in us; the glory of those who are glorified together with Christ, being that of those who are *without fault before the throne of God.* Well may the earnest expectation of the creature wait for, and long after, such a manifestation of the Sons of God.

Another class of passages illustrated in the same manner is that of those which speak of Christ's appearing, as the great era of desire and glory. It is the era of the assumption of this transcendent glory by the Saints, this exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Instructed by the Holy Spirit, they are looking and longing, yearning after and expecting that day of Christ; and they are exhorted to rejoice now, if partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, they may be glad also with exceeding great joy. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. When he who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. The excitement of this hope, the living upon it, and the being animated by it, came to be, as we have previously intimated, so much a characteristic of the early, loving, suffering saints, that Paul speaks of them, as those who love the Lord's appearing. In that appearing he shall come to be glorified in his

saints, and admired in all them that believe, who shall then be presented faultless before the throne of his glory with exceeding great joy.

To this faultlessness all things are now tending, all things in God's Word, providence, and grace, working towards its consummation. And this illustrates remarkably yet another class of passages, which connect the work of sanctification in its progress in this world with this same era of Christ's appearing, and some of which express such intense desire and anxiety on the part of the Apostle, for the holiness of the saints, being confident, Paul says in Phil. i. 6, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. And again, in 1st Cor. i. 8, Who shall also confirm you unto the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so, in 1st Thess. iii. 13, in language almost the same as that used by John in the Apocalypse; and in 1st Thess. v. 13, the Apostle says, The very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This work is travelling always on; every labor of the saints, every prayer of faith, every advancement in holiness, is necessary to it; and the climax and consummation of it is not to be a sudden new creation, but a revelation of what was hidden, and an uncovering to the view of the whole universe, of the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the Saints. In reference to it, and to all the arrangements making for it, we seem, as it were, seated in a dark room, gazing towards an illimitable transparency which is preparing for the vision, but not yet lighted up, nor the figures perfected, nor the coloring perfectly prepared, but preparing, for the transmission of the light which is to shine through it. So we wait, so the perfection of the saints waits, so the admiring universe waits, for Christ's appearing, Christ's revelation, as the light, the significance, the fountain of all this glory. And